

# UNDER FOUR FLAGS FOR FRANCE



GEORGE CLARKE MUSGRAVE

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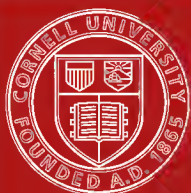
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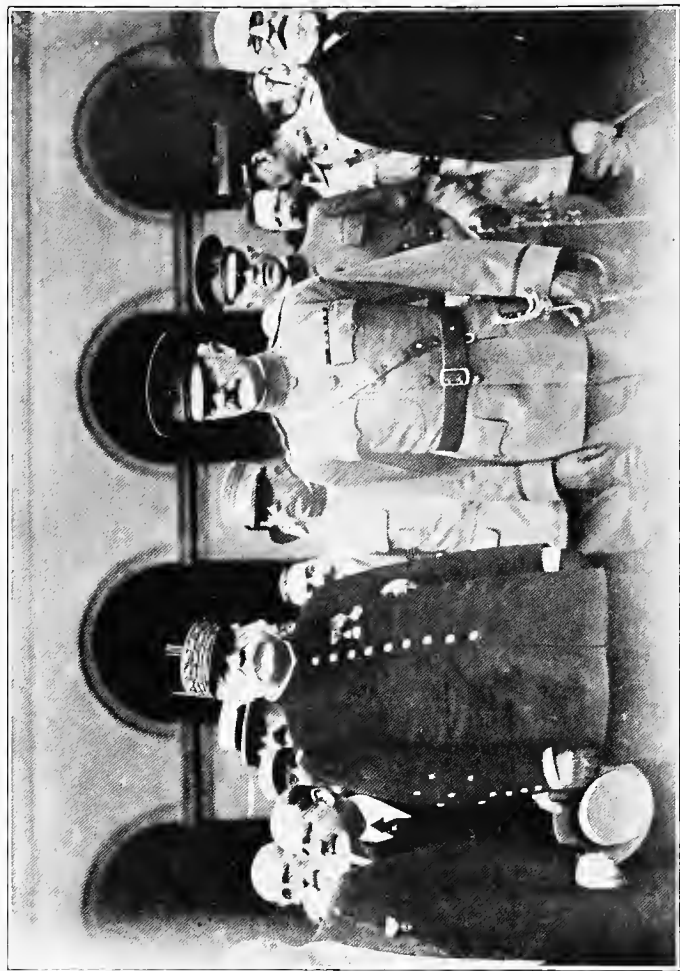
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**UNDER FOUR FLAGS  
FOR FRANCE**







MARSHALL JOFFRE AND GENERAL PERSHING SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE



# UNDER FOUR FLAGS FOR FRANCE

BY  
GEORGE CLARKE MUSGRAVE

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"IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH BULLER,"  
ETC.



ILLUSTRATED

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
NEW YORK LONDON

1918

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**Printed in the United States of America**

TO  
E. R. B.





## INTRODUCTION

This book has been published at the suggestion of an officer of the United States Army whom I met recently in Europe. A keen student of the world war, he had followed its phases in the newspapers and had delved liberally in the imposing array of war books. But when he reached France, he found that he lacked perspective. Focussed on the great events, public attention has been moved daily to different episodes in the far-flung areas of conflict, until the mental picture has become kaleidoscopic.

The super-strategy of Germany was based on a plan to extend her frontier straight across France to the mouth of the Seine. Hinged on Metz, her armies were to carry her frontier posts outward across Luxemburg and Belgium and, in an impressive sweep, swing the line south to embrace all of northern France. The French Army was to be overwhelmed in the process, and the capture of Paris would have been the logical result.

Unprepared for this violation of neutral territory, Joffre met super-strategy with simple strategy and super-tactics which modified the invasion and wrecked all chances of a German victory and the bid for world dominance.

From the outset, the operations on the Western front must be approached as a prolonged battle with every unit consolidated in the general plan. Everyone has read of definite actions in certain sectors, while brilliant phases, on which the developments of the campaign were based, have frequently been unrecorded.

On the great battlefield outlined by the virtues and failures of Joffre's strategy, the United States Army is taking its place. A comprehensive story of the unified

## INTRODUCTION

efforts of the composite armies to limit the German invasion and push it back to the frontier is necessary for many readers who desire to follow their own army in the field with a freshened memory and a coherent record of the events which have built up existing conditions. This I have endeavored to present.

The Marne, Ypres, Verdun, are household words. Nancy, Lassigny, the Ancre Valley, and the Scarpe are among the vital French battles that have escaped general attention. Having had a fortunate opportunity to follow the recession of the German flood from the Aisne northward in successive efforts to flow around the French flank, on the Oise, above the Somme, across south and north Artois, and finally from Lille and Belgium, to reach the coveted coast, I have perhaps been able to supply links necessary for a complete understanding of the greatest of French efforts when there were no correspondents and the most rigid censorship existed.

In a nascent history well-known episodes must take their place to complete the story. But the basis of these pages is personal observation widened by a collection of facts gathered for three years from unusual sources—bivouacs, hospitals, prisoner convoys, and neutral points close to the enemy's frontier, where conditions in Belgium and the German side have added to the store. In these chapters I have tried to give a concise story of the war, tinged with human interest and so arranged that its ramifications are reduced to a straightforward account of the achievements of France and her Allies under the master hand of Joffre, whose policy endures.

The closing pages were outlined under the influence of two inspiring challenges to Teutonic fury—the thunder of the new British guns in Belgium, and the American buglers sounding "Taps."

GEORGE C. MUSGRAVE.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BELGIAN PRELUDE

THE last days of July, 1914, found the industrious population of Belgium untroubled by rumor of war. The country people were concerned chiefly with plans for their summer Kermesses. Suddenly a commotion arose in every town and village. From Brussels came the curt order for the mobilization of the army. The surprised mayors pasted up the telegrams. Officers hurried into the busy factories: "Report yourselves."

The newspapers had told the public that Austria had declared war on far-off Servia, but what had that to do with prosperous and contented Belgium? They now heard that Germany had sent an ultimatum ordering Russia to demobilize. But, again, how was that their affair in Flanders, where everybody was busily maintaining the industries which made their trade balance, proportioned per capita, the greatest in the world? Only a few policemen, on the next Sunday night, saw an automobile dash across

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country, breaking every speed limit, regardless of challenges. A Belgian employed on the railroad had overheard specific train orders in Cologne and historic legend had repeated itself in modern fashion. First by train, then by electric car, and finally by automobile, he had dashed through the night to get the tidings to the capital. That was why a party of army engineers came next morning to the bridge across the Meuse at Visé and drove away the children who had gathered to watch them. Eight German armies were preparing to attack France and strong forces were assembling to reach Belgium at sunrise.

Since 1831 the preservation of the neutrality of Belgium had been the sworn gospel of Europe. During the War of 1870, Germany expressed to England the fear that France might violate this neutrality, and Gladstone, supported by Disraeli, declared that such a step would range Great Britain as an ally of Prussia. Also a section of the Hague convention, ratified by Germany, reads—"The Fact of a Power resisting by force an attempt to violate its neutrality cannot be regarded as a hostile act."

On the evening of Sunday, August 2, Germany sent a twelve-hour ultimatum, generous in tone if accepted, demanding that Belgium forget her sacred obligations and allow free passage for armies to invade France. Without hesitation the young ruler of this most democratic of kingdoms voiced the will of

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his people in refusal. He had only the summer Sunday night to gather his parliament from country and sea shore, to ratify the dignified refusal of the note written by M. Davignon. Before daylight the messenger had reached the Palace with news that the Germans were moving. As the legislators assembled, it was 7 A. M. and German troops started over the border. Every bell rang out the news.

The Meuse forms a natural defense to Belgium on a line extending from the French frontier near Givet, whence it flows north to Namur, roughly eastward through Huy to Liège, then north again to Holland. Between Liège and Namur the river parallels the direct road and rail between Berlin and Paris, which run through the military base at Cologne via Aix-la-Chapelle across Belgium to France, and thence via Maubeuge and St. Quentin to Paris. To discourage the use of this natural line of invasion across her territory by either France or Germany, strong fortifications had been erected by Belgium, at Namur and Liège. Namur closed the gate to France; Liège closed the portal to Germany. On the main roads from Germany to the heart of Belgium there were no fortifications.

To avoid the fortified line on the Franco-German border and to strike decisive blows before France had time to mobilize, the German General Staff planned to hurl five armies across neutral Belgium and Luxemburg at points where the French frontier

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was practically unfortified. Fully prepared, they gave Belgium nominal notice of one night, and instantly started their columns over the frontier. Liège was the first obstacle, and strong advance forces of the Second Army moved forward on the roads converging there, through Verviers, Dolhain, Francorchamps and Stavelot. An army corps forced its way through Luxemburg, seizing the railroads of the Grand Duchy, opening the way for the Fourth and Fifth Armies, and sending a detached column north by rail through Trois Vierges (Faith, Hope and Charity) to ravish the undefended districts of southeast Belgium.

Belgian resistance was not taken seriously—the army was small, untried and scattered. A swift blow, therefore, was aimed by the First German Army from Aix-la-Chapelle at the nearest point, the Visé bridge, where troops could pour unhampered across the Meuse, isolate and attack General Leman and the Third Division of the Field Army which was mobilizing at Diest, and strike at the heart of Belgium without touching fortifications.

Visé lies on the German side of the river. On the road toward the frontier, a patrol of Belgian lancers was already waiting—David looking for Goliath. When a cloud of dust approaching resolved itself, they galloped back through the town and across the bridge where the expectant engineers were waiting. With a roar a breach was blown in

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the structure, the permanent break between Belgium and Germany. Too late the Uhlans galloped down to the bridge-head where a solitary town guard, in glazed billy-cock and unarmed, stepped forward in protest. Emblem of insignificant Right against Might, he spoke, and laid a restraining hand on the leader's bridle. This was the Civil challenge, contemptuously met and ending in a lance thrust. Instantly the military power, the handful of Belgian troops in the broken masonry across the river, took up the gage, and poured a volley across the breach, which sent the Uhlans flying, and veritably echoed round the world, the first definite shots in the greatest war in history. The mobile columns marched into Visé just too late.

The destroyed bridge caused a short but vital delay to the invaders of the First Army, which sent back for pontoon trains and made a crossing toward neutral Maastricht. Cavalry and light artillery poured over and massed at Tongres, covering all roads to cut off General Leman. But he had already gathered his famous Third Division and had made a dash of sixty-eight miles south to Liège, where volunteers were erecting defenses between the forts, and preparing for the German columns already converging on the city, expecting to find it garrisoned only by artillery. Another pontoon bridge was later erected below Visé, and a column crossed to the west bank, to march on Liège from

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the north. This force swept aside local troops assembling along the river, shooting as spies the peasants who rowed away from their goose farms sometimes with information, generally with the not unnatural desire to get their families on the "safe" side of the Meuse.

In turn its advance guard was surprised by Belgian cavalry and cut to pieces. The column, however, pushed steadily south along the river, with huge screens of cavalry sweeping the districts on its right flank, spreading terror everywhere and in many cases rounding up and executing as civilians volunteers, poorly armed, but regularly enrolled in the villages to patrol roads and watch for the enemy.

When this column entered Herstal, birthplace of Charlemagne and site of the National Arms factory, the men were away busily preparing defenses at Liège. But the women seized rifles and cartridges from the factories; scalding water was drawn from the boilers; oil was heated; and as the leading elements of the column went through the town they were furiously assailed, and finally forced to withdraw until artillery hammered out the spirited opposition. This fight accounts for the slaughter of many women and children. The defense of Herstal was a fight by civilians. Yet every free heart thrills at the story, and the delay entailed was of great value to the garrison feverishly strengthening its position a few miles south.

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Many civilians from the neighborhood, suspected of trying to take information to Liège, were shot and their homes destroyed. This recalls the fact that the homes of Spanish railroadmen who spied on the landing of troops near Santiago were respected and their families fed by the United States Army.

We must realize that the Germans at the outset were enraged by losses inflicted from every bit of cover, a resistance which they had not expected. Remember also that the descendants of the people who withstood the Spanish Fury were not likely to submit tamely, and a bitterly hostile countryside undoubtedly broke formal rules of war. Study the testimony of those neutrals who marched with the main German army and speak of its discipline. Erase the effect of exaggerated stories of atrocities. All this still leaves hundreds of positive incidents of severity which make the earlier days of invasion a black spot on German history, and without parallel in modern times.

The first Germans seen in Liège were Uhlans. A patrol made a detour, rode into the unprotected suburbs through St. Laurent, and with magnificent effrontery cantered to the Belgian Headquarters on the rue Sainte Foi. They dashed in upon the staff, shot down several officers and rushed at General Leman. Colonel Marchand, however, unarmed and single-handed, fought them off with his fists and was

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instantly killed, while an aide dragged the general backward through a rear door. Boy scouts, waiting for duty, recognized the uniform, stampeded the horses with their staves and gave the alarm to guards who rushed up and bayoneted the invaders.

Further south two corps of the Second German Army were closing irresistibly on Liège. Various Belgian detachments had harassed its columns persistently, firing from wooded hills along the route, despite flanking cavalry, ineffective against a mobile foe which knew the by-paths and was helped by commandeered automobiles with machine guns.

As a proof of German preparation, war had come automatically at 7 A. M., August 3. At 23 o'clock (Belgian time) the outposts on the main roads holding Pepinster, Battice, Herve and smaller hamlets, were heavily engaged and finally forced back to the fortified lines of Liège. The pretty towns defended near the frontier were soon flaming ruins, the quaint neutral territory of Moresnet rising as an oasis in a desert of destruction.

The German attack was so sudden that the Belgian Third Division in Liège could only be supplemented by the Fifteenth Mixed Brigade before the city was invested. Detachments of Civil Guards and enrolled civilian volunteers, who aided the defense, were afterward refused the rights of belligerents, and many were executed. The defenses of Liège were based on a ring of twelve self-contained forts, dominant



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points on the circumference of the natural bowl in which the city is spread over the junction of the Meuse and lesser rivers and canals and railroads. Next to Antwerp, the position, fortified in 1886, marked the supreme effort of Brialmont. The forts were capped with burnished steel cupolas based on solid concrete, with disappearing guns. The turrets were impregnable to the fire of regular artillery, the domes deflecting shells fired at ordinary trajectory. Given sufficient time to prepare subordinate field works between the forts, and enough troops to man the defensive circumference of thirty-three miles, the position was practically impregnable under old conditions. Redoubts between the forts, often suggested, had never been constructed.

Because of the frank threats of German military writers, and the network of strategic railroads that had been built from the German military bases to the Belgian, French and Russian frontiers, to enable rapid concentration of troops, Belgium had partly heeded the warning and kept the forts equipped. It is significant, however, that a large order for shells for the 400 guns in the defenses, placed with the Krupps for delivery during the previous spring, had been delayed persistently without satisfactory excuse. The Belgian Field Artillery also had little proper ammunition, and I have seen scores of their guns with the rifling torn out through the use of old shells without driving bands. Time and men were

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lacking to prepare adequately and to hold field works in the huge gaps between the forts before the attack on Liége opened, for while demanding that Russia demobilize, Germany had three army corps ready to attack this plant alone.

General von Emmich, commanding the Tenth Army Corps, had charge of the operations against Liége. With the Tenth was the Seventh Corps, under Count von Arnim, and the Ninth followed under General von Luetwitz. The advance guard of the Seventh Corps first clashed with the Belgian outposts on the Herve road. Forces moving from Verviers through the Vesdre Valley were also hotly engaged on August 3. By afternoon of the 4th the attack had fully developed, and the Seventh Corps advanced in force on the northeast sectors including Forts Barchon and Evegnée. The Germans opened fire with their regular complement of field artillery, but the shells ricocheted harmlessly from the forts, and Evegnée was bombarded for hours without losing a man. A large force of infantry then moved in close order against Fort Barchon, sweeping below the final depression of the guns. The center reached the glacis of the fort before it was swept away by infantry and machine guns in the parapet. The left and right wings pushed on against the two-mile gaps on either side, to encounter an effective repulse from a line of crude trenches constructed hastily the previous night. Three times the assault was at-

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tempted with huge masses which were slaughtered in hundreds and hurled back. After dark the Germans retired out of range with appalling losses. Their expected surprises had miscarried.

But on the 5th the Germans were heavily reënforced as the Tenth Corps, including the famous Ironsides of Brandenburg, closed in, followed by the Ninth Corps. Attacks were now delivered on all sides, and though the defenders fought desperately, General Leman soon found that he could no longer muster enough troops to meet simultaneous assaults between all the forts. Early on the 6th, heavy artillery opened on the town without notice, shelling three of the oldest churches in existence, and smashing stained glass and carvings which all the world loved and which can never be replaced. Many women and children were killed, and a Zeppelin added to the terrors.

Realizing that the city was doomed, the Belgian field forces made an amazing escape late at night on the 7th and the Germans entered next day. Though enormous siege howitzers were now firing, the forts prepared to resist to the last. General Leman and his staff retired to Fort Loncin.

His cavalry and cyclist patrols, cut off east of the city, maintained a vigorous guerrilla warfare on the German communications. Their lawful tactics caused the most heartless reprisals by the invaders against the civil population. A detachment under

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Corporal Van Dael, an artist well known in New York, rode around the outskirts of Visé, cleaned up guards on the water supply, from a hill sniped officers' cars in Maastricht Avenue, and ambushed some Hussars at Loretto. In reprisal many hostages in Visé were executed, and the town, in which all arms had been given up, was set on fire. Even the church containing the famous reliquary, Chasse de St. Hadelin, was gutted, firemen being shot and thrown to the flames. In a dozen villages the shameful story was repeated. Noncombatants trapped in the outskirts of Liége suffered terribly before the Germans gained entry August 8.

Let no one underrate the capture of Liége as a feat of arms. For four days, gallantly and fruitlessly, the infantry in massed formation had tried to storm modern fortifications. The secret of the war, Germany's huge siege artillery, then came into action. Austrian howitzers <sup>1</sup> and Krupp mortars, with high-angle fire and enormous projectiles, spelled the doom of the forts. The necessary masonry platforms were ready when the hour arrived. Concrete takes many days to dry, and on the 6th the guns were in place. The Germans now claim that they have a secret concrete which hardens rapidly. In Belgium and in France there is positive proof that gun platforms were ready, carefully masked as the founda-

<sup>1</sup> Austrian gunners were fighting at Liége and Namur several days before their country had declared war on Belgium.



MACHINE GUNS OF THE BELGIAN GUIDE CAVALRY VOLUNTEERS



GIANT AUSTRIAN HOWITZLER IN BELGIUM



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tions of flimsy commercial sheds operated by German firms. The guns had the range measured to a foot by previous survey.

On Fort Loncin, west of the city, a ton of steel dropped from the sky cracked its central turret like an eggshell, and blew the top of the fort to pieces. Subsequent shells destroyed the entire structure, the heroic Belgian commander being buried in the ruins. Major Collard, two devoted orderlies and a gendarme, crept into the shattered vaults where General Lemane was being asphyxiated by the gases, and tore the masonry from his body. Major Collard collapsed and was suffocated. The other heroes dragged the General out and when he recovered consciousness the Germans were standing by him.

General von Emmich hurried over, shook hands with his brave adversary, refusing his sword and congratulating him on his defense. "Report that I was insensible when I was captured, that I did not surrender," Lemane replied. The other forts made a sporadic defense for days. Not one capitulated after the city had fallen. They were reduced one by one in turn, becoming the tombs of their gallant defenders. At Fort Chaudfontaine Major Nameche blew up his magazine, dying with his men after sending engines and dynamite into the nearest tunnel, thus destroying the railroad to Aix-la-Chapelle. Near Chaudfontaine half of the Thirty-fourth Regiment was cut off in the woods, but finally cut its way

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out at night and reached Namur. Ten days were lost in opening the first gate to France.

The Belgian Army, with its *Garde Civique*, was originally a compulsory National Guard, stiffened by a small regular army and its trained reserves. It also had some splendid volunteer regiments. Its formation deserves special study in the United States, as it maintained an effective fighting force with few of the elements of conscription. Many definite plans for improvements were being tested when war broke out. Its strength then was 260,000, more than half being fortress troops.

The mobilization was conducted like clockwork, the Brussels division being equipped and ready in twenty-four hours. The infantry divisions are large, 22,000 men. Extensive fortifications called for garrison forces more than equalling the field army, and for them the Civil Guard was largely destined, until Germany denied these National Guardsmen belligerent rights, and deliberately executed those captured fighting. The Civil Guard, therefore, was finally withdrawn until it could be uniformed and incorporated in the regular army. Colonel Falls, then Adjutant of the Seventh Regiment of New York, was at the front with the Belgian army, and his instructive report on the simple effectiveness of Belgian mobilization has been filed in Washington.

While Liége was tottering, the Belgian Field Army,



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which was to have been caught when scattered and unprepared, by the First German Army, which had massed unopposed at Tongres, had moved swiftly to its allotted positions. Its front, facing east, formed a huge crescent between France and Holland, its right resting near Namur, the line curving across Brabant through Wavre, Louvain, Aerschot and Diest, with cavalry on both flanks.

When the First and Second German Armies should have been sweeping across France if the dash to Paris was to succeed, the Field Army across Belgium had still to be defeated. They attacked on both flanks, and by sheer weight of numbers beat the Belgian left and right back until the crescent became inverted into a semi-circle before Brussels. Namur was thus isolated, but the Field Army was intact and fighting stubbornly, delaying actions when every hour gained was of vital importance to France.

Recall the German contention of military necessity, which claimed that French troops were massing at Givet to attack Germany through Belgium. During the spirited resistance of her small neighbor, the French had neither the forces available to make a defensive line along the Meuse, nor to check the army that marched in unopposed, north of Luxemburg. In the third week of war, only cavalry could be spared to help the Belgian right and when General Sylvester led his mounted troops to Gembloux, they

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were too late to make a junction. Namur was cut off and almost invested when a single French battalion went up to reënforce the garrison. History must emphatically negative the German claim. Nearly a million men were ravishing Belgium before France moved a man across the frontier.

When war was imminent, two unarmed engineer officers did motor from France two miles over the frontier to discuss the need of destroying the new bridge near the famous church at Hastierre, a gateway to France. Less serious than the presence of the spies who reported it, this incident is the basis of the charge proclaimed by world-known professors as a breach of neutrality, and a justification for all that Germany has done to Belgium.

I could fill a volume with unpublished incidents of the campaign which I have gathered from Belgian soldiers, officials, refugees and German deserters. When we realize that a peaceful country suddenly swarmed with hostile detachments, partly free from discipline and encouraged in excesses, outrages on unprotected women were to be expected. There are fiends in every nation and in peace the statistics of degeneracy in Germany were astounding. What does materially concern the world was the enforcement of an authorized and pitiless military code of rape, arson, murder and theft, which no people outside Germany can either justify or understand; the deliberate foundation for their political heritage

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with a nation which they expected to absorb and Germanize.

Though all its articles were not ratified by all the nations, the Hague Convention definitely outlines the military code of the United States, and by that code the conduct of the war will be judged by American public opinion. A clause agreed to by Germany states that the inhabitants of a territory, who take up arms spontaneously to resist invading troops without having time to organize themselves, shall be regarded as belligerents, if they carry arms openly and respect the laws of war. When the call for volunteers was made, civil guards, reservists, ex-soldiers and other able-bodied men hurried to various points of mobilization. Notably at Visé, the dividing line of Flemings and Walloons, who everywhere rallied to the common cause, men from outlying districts seized their rifles, but were caught in the tide of invasion as they made their way to various centers. They were rounded up in scores and summarily executed, because they had no uniforms. Most of them were members of organized forces that corresponded to the National Guard of the United States. The splendid armories of American cities are unknown in Europe. Detachments were widely scattered; the men kept their rifles for local drills, but uniforms and equipment were stored at central headquarters for use when the regiments were mustered for training, parade or emergency.

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In the Liége district a female spy was employed at some telephone exchange. The names of many people who called up Belgian Headquarters with information during the invasion were reported and all who were caught were shot. Among these was the superb heroine of Dalhem, a girl of seventeen. German batteries were grouped before her home, and regardless of the hail of bursting shells she remained for hours on the wire, correcting the aim of the Belgian gunners who were engaging the enemy's artillery. She did not flinch as she faced the firing squad, so piteously alone. Some of us who are pledged after the war to erect a statue on the spot hallowed by that child-woman's blood will appeal for funds only to the children of the United States and the British Empire, that each may give a mite.

Caught in Verviers by the war and trying to reach Ostend, Dr. John Munro MacKenzie, pastor emeritus of the Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church of Liverpool, seventy-eight and an invalid, was staying with Mr. Blaise, an official of Dalhem. The night that Liége fell an isolated patrol of the Thirty-fourth Regiment fired at the guard as they fled past the town, killing two men. In reprisal several houses were fired by the Germans, the male inmates being shot down like dogs as they escaped. The stairs of the Blaise home were on fire when the inmates, including a Danish lady with a sick child and the aged clergyman, escaped in their night

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clothes. Dr. MacKenzie and Mr. Blaise, with his wife clinging to him, were dragged to the gutter and shot at close range. Other people were burned in their beds. The shameful reign of terror there is fully verified.

At a later stage some cavalymen had ordered coffee made at a village store. Owing to the intolerable sanitary conditions caused by the bivouac of thousands of troops, the local authorities had distributed small bags of quicklime. These Belgians had no sugar, but an eager soldier ladled lime into the coffee by mistake. The storekeeper and his wife were executed. Like a mare's nest a wholesale poison plot was scented, and several innocent people who had the official lime were shot, before an officer arrived who could interpret and understand.

A boy scout, returning from a mission near Ghent, was caught by Hussars and, refusing to answer questions, was taken up the road a prisoner. Without a sign he let his captors march into an ambush of the troops to which he was attached as messenger, and after the fight he was executed. At Soiron three farmers, finding soldiers stealing their crops, were attacked. They defended themselves with hay forks and killed one in the fight. They were hanged in a row.

Paul Hocker, the novelist, and Captain of Landwehr, describes the code. He was searching for arms. A boy, an enrolled volunteer, was discov-

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ered in the straw, with a rifle. The mother and sister pleaded, but the youth was shot. "Thus we suppress the rabble that wars on German soldiers," was the naïve comment in the diary of this cultured author. A boy, executed near Louvain, was patrolling the road with an empty .22 rifle, by the side of his soldier father. Peasants sometimes fired; they often waylaid and attacked small detachments of men that were ravishing their women. But the actual perpetrators were seldom caught, the villages were burned and innocent victims were hanged or shot. If hostages had been taken, generally mayors and priests, they paid forfeit if an over-zealous citizen or patrol fired a shot. At Aerschot, after its capture, three shots at night led to the destruction of several streets and the indiscriminate shooting of 150 civilians in reprisal. The nephew of a lady whom I had met at the Plaza a few months earlier, a lad of 16, was executed. His crime was a hot-headed remark made when the house was searched. No rifles were found, but this house was deliberately burned.

These are typical of hundreds of incidents of ruthless official massacre and destruction stimulated by inspired stories of impossible outrages by an unarmed people against an army. When half Belgium was a smoldering ruin the chief German surgeon of the Military Hospital in Aix-la-Chapelle, through which all casualties were then evacuated,

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admitted that he had seen no German wounded mutilated by Belgians.

For eleven days, fighting raged along the entire Belgian line across Brabant. Louvain fell August 19, and with both flanks enveloped the army was forced to withdraw to Brussels, unfortified but hastily barricaded. The government had moved to Antwerp. To save the capital from destruction, on August 20, the barricades were removed and the greatly outnumbered army fell back in good order to the fortified lines of Antwerp. But von Kluck turned his main forces at Brussels and moved to France, leaving new formations to hold the roads. The Belgians made a sortie on the 25th and reached Malines. The alarm from this fighting and the running amuck at night of a youth, half-crazed by an attempted assault of his sister by a staff officer, led to the burning of the Ville Haute quarter of Louvain, including the Jesuit college and the famous library. Civilians were executed in scores, including many neutral students. Among them were five Spaniards, for whom Germany has paid Spain 100,000 marks for their relatives, with an official apology.

The German schedule had allowed five days for the armies to wheel across Belgium from the frontier zones, with columns only partly unfolded. With siege guns on the left to batter the forts, the right wing was to rely on its cavalry for combat, and move in echelon to shorten the arc of the wide swing, on

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moving pivot, to change the front from west to south, and sweep on across France in line with the center armies. Six days more were to find the columns fully unfolded and deploying on the wide front between Verdun and Paris to attack before the French armies could mobilize and concentrate. Three weeks had been consumed before Namur fell. The First, Second and Third German Armies then could only complete the turn to march southward down the main roads to France by leaving the unbroken Belgian army intact in its last stronghold to retain for weeks an army of investment urgently needed to support the march on Paris. And Anglo-French forces were now gathering across their path.

The delay stirred the invaders to frenzy, and the final days were black for Belgium. Women and children were forced to act as screens to the advance, and the rear guards wreaked foul vengeance on the captured villages as they were evacuated. Every one has heard of children with amputated hands, but not a single case has been authenticated, and the widespread canard has been easily refuted. Shall we substitute the charge by the photograph now beside me, taken by German soldiers, showing the tortured bodies of seven tiny girls in a heap? Here is another of five older girls on the banks of a stream, also outraged to death. One of a boy crouched beside the stripped body of his sister. Here are medical photographs also of living victims of degener-



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ates—these reached Belgian and French surgeons, but perhaps would have been better dead. Officers inured to battle turn away in horror from these photographs which illustrate part of the price that the innocent country has paid. “We lived like gods in Belgium, boozing and raping our way across,” wrote one soldier to his brother.

## CHAPTER II

### ON TO FRANCE

THE German General Staff had provided for the simultaneous invasion of France by eight armies, from their great military bases linked by a network of strategic railways, which insured effective mobilization and rapid transportation to the frontier. The complete success of the operations depended upon the ability to strike at all points while the French were unprepared and in the chaos of mobilization, and to dash rapidly against Paris, delivering decisive blows before the ponderous forces of Russia must be met by a strong army on the eastern frontier. Every detail for the violation of neutral territories had been provided for, including proclamations in Flemish and French for general exigencies, many with date of imprint of 1906.

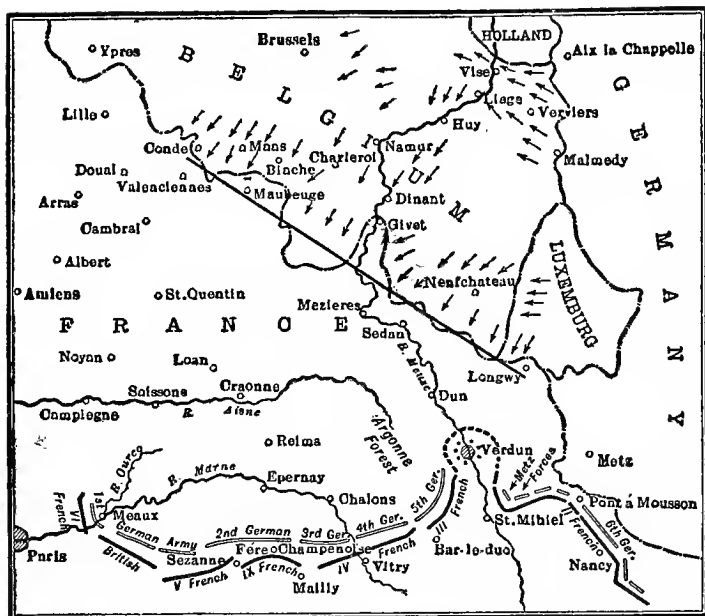
From Cologne the armies marching via Belgium advanced through Aix-la-Chapelle. The First Army under General von Kluck, as described, moved due west across the unprotected section of the Meuse through the heart of Belgium, to march on France with its main advance down the Lille road from Brussels. The Second Army, under von Buelow,

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took the direct route from Berlin to Paris through Liége and Namur to Charleroi and into France via Maubeuge. Von Buelow had heavy siege trains, chiefly Austrian, to batter the forts en route. The Third Army, Saxon, under von Hausen, reached Belgium through Malmedy, marching along the Meuse to Huy, then southwest to Dinant, where the road, rail and river lead down to the frontier to France at Givet. Based on Coblenz, the Fourth Army under the Duke of Wurttemberg, advanced across North Luxemburg and Belgium and struck France at Mézières and Sedan. Based on Coblenz and Frankfurt, the Fifth Army, under the Crown Prince, crossed Luxemburg to Arlon and attacked France at Longwy and Stenay, aiming at Verdun. The Sixth Army, under Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, backed by the heavy artillery of the Metz garrison, moved across Lorraine against the Verdun-Toul barrier, to menace the forts and aim at the gap at Nancy, the key to the splendid roads along the Marne to Paris. The Seventh Army, under the veteran von Heeringen, attacked on the line from Luneville through Baccarat and St. Dié. The Eighth Army, under Lieut. Gen. von Deimling, moved across Alsace, operating through the Vosges.

General Joffre has been criticized severely for reversing the importance of the invading armies. Facts prove that he did nothing of the kind. Some experts have pointed out that the dictates of com-

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MAP No. 1.—AREA COVERED DURING THE STRATEGIC RETREAT,  
AND DISPOSITION OF THE OPPOSING ARMIES,  
BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

To gain a general idea of Joffre's strategic retreat, the black line shows the approximate line where the Field armies rallied after they were thrown back to the French frontier. Move the line back southwest across the Meuse until it touches the Verdun field works. Then hinge it back from the Fortress until the left touches the environs of Paris, and the area of the retreat will have been covered. The arrows show the general direction of the German columns as they unfolded to invade France.

Below, the relative positions of the opposing armies are shown on the front from Paris to Verdun and on the east front to Nancy on the eve of the Marne battle described in Chapter III.

## ON TO FRANCE

mon-sense strategy would have prepared a campaign based on a great effort to hold the Belgian Meuse to save North France. But Joffre has the gift of uncommon sense. Had France been planning the war, her preparations might have been made in that direction. But defense has been France's watchword. Her policy was based on a pathetic belief that Belgian territory was inviolate, and to the last she avoided any step which would give Germany an excuse to trample over the buffer State. The chief French armies were based on points adjacent to the German frontier, and fixed plans of concentration cannot be changed over night. For years prominent Frenchmen had pleaded that the northern frontier should be fortified. The Committee of Defense specifically recommended that extensive forts and field works should be prepared, and garrisons maintained between Lille and Maubeuge, and through the Ardennes to Longwy, with a protected military railroad along the entire Belgian frontier. Prominent statesmen opposed this as a direct challenge for Germany to violate Belgium.

Recall, also, that for ten years, curiously ignored in Great Britain and in the United States, pacific doctrines, largely socialistic, prevailed in France, based on a magnificent gospel of international brotherhood. The militarized socialism of Germany was reciprocated in France by a genuine policy for disarmament and universal peace. The disciples of

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Jaurès shackled every reform and appropriation for the Army or Navy. Each measure urged for national defense was defeated on the plea that it would invite aggression. Farsighted statesmen, who knew that Germany was improving her artillery and making military efficiency a religion, were cried down. The theory of French pacifism was the most beautiful that the world had seen, and it was based on sound common sense. But it misunderstood its only menace—the subtle effect of national achievement in Germany on a virile and military people.

The sudden crisis which developed in Morocco woke France from a trance. It checked the gospel of Hervé, which was breaking down military discipline in the Reserves, and converted Briand, Millerand and Clemenceau. At once they reorganized the Army and Navy, and restored the original scope of conscription by a new military law. But to the last hour the pacifists remained true to the idea of a federated Europe without frontiers.

Recalling frank threats that I had heard, in Cuba, Africa, Finland and Siberia, from some of those skilled soldier-commercials who develop German trade and study every local phase, military and political, through the world, I was deeply interested in a discussion on Belgium between American and French army engineers at the close of the July review in Paris, 1913. The French staff had evidently decided that their preparation along the

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Eastern frontier would tax German mobilization so severely that it would not pay her to involve England by an invasion via Belgium.

Before that visit to Paris closed, we were to hear the band of the Thirty-first Regiment drowned by the fierce tones of the "*Internationale*," with cries of "Death to the Army," as the regiment crossed the Belleville District. When loyalists started the "*Marseillaise*," the crowd threw stones and a fierce riot resulted. Thus we can perhaps compare militarism in France and Germany in 1913.

In May, 1914, M. Méssimy, after great opposition, did manage to get a modified bill passed, making three inadequate grants for northern frontier defense. Hisses then for this War Minister, now a soldier. Cries also of "Death to the Army," and some scuffling in July when Paris again became an armed camp. Hisses also for Joffre, because he forced several picturesque old generals into retirement for failures at maneuvers. And two weeks after the close of the *Quatorze Juillet* had again demobilized and scattered thousands of France's soldiers, a conclusive proof that the Republic had not dreamed of war, a huge German army was waiting for the bugle to march on France via Belgium and the open frontier, her mobilization far greater and more rapid than France or the world, including unofficial Germany, had dreamed. And Jaurès was dead, murdered by a disciple crazed by the fear that

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France was betrayed by the pacific leaders, who had accepted too literally the divine command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

When Belgium was invaded, the French realized that invasion must also be their lot, but along routes which would entail long lines of communication through hostile territory, and menaced by detached French armies. Paris would probably face a siege; but to besiege the capital was not necessarily to take it. There were no forces directly available to defend Belgium or to hold the north frontier. The Germans had Belgium on the brain, and expected that the French would tangle their plan of concentration by an attempt to rush their armies there, and would meet defeat in the process, leaving the barrier forts to hold their own. But, though German siege artillery surprised the world, the French staff was not surprised. Joffre, therefore, left the northern invaders until last, making his strong lines of defense doubly sure first, and throwing the flower of his army over the German frontier as a counter stroke.

A strong series of field works was constructed facing the German frontier, to keep the siege guns from shelling the barrier forts. Early in the war these lines were manned and secured. This frustrated the second part of the German plan, which aimed to isolate and crush Verdun with heavy artillery while a way was battered via Nancy at the



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gap between Toul and Epinal, to open a direct road and railroad from Germany to France by which forces could pour to Paris, and attack in rear the French armies sent to cope with the huge commands advancing via Belgium. The first clash of patrols was at Delle where André Peugeot was the first French soldier killed in the war.

On the Eastern front the regular first line forces of the French army were quartered, the actual armies of the frontier. At Belfort, with the fortress garrison under General Therenet, was the Seventh Corps under General Bonneau, the Alsace frontier force. The First Army under General Dubail (garrison troops, two divisions of Chasseurs and the Twenty-first Corps), was based on Epinal and guarded the approaches through the Vosges and along the frontier to Luneville. The Second Army, General de Castelnau (garrison troops and the Ninth, Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Twentieth Corps), based on Toul, included some of the finest regiments in France, and guarded the Lorraine border through Nancy and Toul northward toward Verdun. The Third Army (garrison forces and the Sixth and Eighth Corps), reorganized finally under General Sarraill, was based on Verdun, and covered the remainder of the German frontier, curving along the border of neutral Luxemburg, with a second *Corps de Couverture* usually garrisoned at Amiens.

These forces, being well equipped, were soon

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ready, and having completed the barrier outworks, the much criticized offensive in Alsace and Lorraine was started, an ill-judged invasion of Germany to relieve automatically the pressure in Belgium. These brilliant but hazardous attacks had an electrical political effect. The invasion of Alsace took Altkirch and led to the temporary capture of Mulhausen. But these forces, which were to operate along the Rhine and act on the flank of the Second Army as it swept across Lorraine, lost touch. Being faced by superior artillery and attacked in unfortunate positions, they were forced to fall back on the Belfort field works with heavy loss. From Upper Alsace the German Army from Strasburg drove across the frontier, and captured Cirey, Badonviller, and Baccarat, where the civil population suffered terrible indignities. These forces were practically dividing the First and Second French Armies.

In Lorraine, De Castelnau, sent from the Headquarters Staff to lead the splendid Second Army, had advanced over a wide front extending from Luneville to Pont à Mousson. Château Salins was captured, and Morhange and Dieuze, while the French cavalry swept over the Saarburg district. Everywhere the German advance guards were driven back with heavy loss before the impetuous attack of the finest soldiers in France.

German mobilization, however, had been amaz-

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ingly rapid, and we know now that preliminaries were secretly started directly a cloud appeared on the horizon. With magnificent effrontery, while demanding that Russia demobilize, her own active assembling had commenced on July 24. While German legions were sweeping Belgium clean, De Castelnau in Lorraine was entering a territory admirably constituted for defense, and his brilliant advance was suddenly checked. After he had swept over the Seille, August 17, capturing many guns and prisoners, his army was confronted by superior numbers of the enemy on carefully prepared positions, backed by heavy artillery from Metz. His field guns were outranged. His magnificent cavalry on the flanks was everywhere checked by armored cars and machine guns. Difficulties of transport soon hampered the French, now facing well organized forces based on two of the strongest fortifications in the world. The failure and retirement of the army in Alsace had uncovered De Castelnau's right flank, and his command was soon in danger of envelopment from the south.

After terrific fighting for three days, with no means of locating or silencing the mass of heavy artillery carefully concealed in the wooded hills, three successive French assaults failed.

Then from four directions the Germans launched counter attacks on the exhausted invaders, inflicting frightful losses and capturing many guns. Certain

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untried southern units of the Fifteenth Corps, well led by the gallant Espinasse, broke under the strain at Dieuze and imperiled the army. In some features Bull Run affords parallels, notably the magnificent behavior subsequently of the defaulting units from the Bouches du Rhone, especially the 112th that broke one day and the next was decimated in a glorious and voluntary charge at Coincourt, where they drove out superior forces of the enemy. Henceforth the men from Marseilles and Midi fought like lions. Checked, flanked, and short of ammunition, on August 20 rapid retirement to France was necessary to save the army. The famous Twentieth Corps was left to cover the retreat, and these gallant regiments held off the Bavarian army for two days and nights before they were enveloped and one division practically wiped out.

Flushed with victory, the Germans crossed the Lorraine frontier, and swarmed after De Castelnau over the border departments. Three fresh army corps were already moving up on his flank at Luneville, which was evacuated. Fort Manonvillers, isolated, outranged and bombarded, soon capitulated. The advanced outposts of France were down. But everywhere the French rallied on their new defensive line. Dubail's left, which had fallen back from Luneville, now stood firm on the prepared front on high ground, and by coöperation with the Second

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Army reserves and the Toul garrison, brilliant counter attacks were delivered simultaneously south and east of Nancy, forcing the pursuing Germans to withdraw and consolidate. This enabled De Castelnau to rally and establish his shaken forces along the prepared positions on the Grande Couronne of Nancy, and the wooded heights which dominate the roads from Château Salins, natural barriers on the most critical point along the Franco-German frontier.

In jubilant tones the German official reports had spoken of the crushing defeat of De Castelnau. The capture of guns and generals, with spoils from the reverse checked by the Twentieth Corps, fostered their belief. But De Castelnau's forces stood before Nancy like a rock against which successive waves of assault were soon breaking in vain. Nowhere in the war had a German victory seemed more certain or so suddenly elusive. Miles of Joffre's field works kept the heavy artillery from the main frontier positions.

North of Nancy the left of the Second Army, augmented by the Toul garrison, now withstood tremendous pressure from Metz at the point where, with some success, violent efforts were made to break in south of Verdun. A column also reached Spincourt from Metz, only fifteen miles northeast of the French stronghold.

North of Verdun the French had launched a third

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offensive with the field forces of the Third Army against part of Wurttemberg and the Crown Prince's armies marching through Belgian Luxemburg and the Grand Duchy. Here again early successes as at Mangiennes, where guns and 1,200 prisoners were taken, led the troops to an impetuous advance which narrowly escaped disaster. Near Neufchateau, though the Crown Prince had blundered, the Duke of Wurttemberg caught the French flank, when the front was facing a concentration of artillery and machine guns which inflicted terrible losses. Again the French fell back rapidly but without disorder, losing some prisoners, and sacrificing a strong rear guard and its artillery to cover this retirement.

In the other offensives, except for the political effect of the invasion of the lost provinces, great risks were taken with little result, and the armies could have been more wisely employed on the defensive lines which have so effectively checked the German onslaught. Every nation has to learn by bitter experience the difference between offense and defense under modern conditions, Cuba, South Africa and Manchuria notwithstanding. On the Luxemburg frontier, however, the checked offensive gained important strategic results. It changed the plans of the impetuous Crown Prince, and disarranged his coöperation with the Duke of Wurttemberg. But the army corps that covered the French retirement was terribly cut up, and the remnant, in-

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cluding its highest officers, was captured. Here especially, the brilliance of the French uniforms cost many lives.

Enraged by the sight of their first dead, some of the Crown Prince's soldiers lost their heads, and during the French retreat many wounded were bayoneted or killed with rifle butts as the Germans swept over the field. Americans with the French Red Cross verify this, and state that surgeons and their helpers were also murdered. Such incidents are an illuminating commentary on the German state of mind. The ruthless ferocity is not merely inherent brutality. It springs from a spirit of unimaginative revenge against those who oppose the doctrine of Divine Germanic Right, which is the source of the enemy's great strength, and greatest weakness.

The advance of the Crown Prince was also delayed by the amazing defense of Longwy by Colonel d'Arche and an insignificant garrison. Surprised when the war started, and completely invested, this heroic French force imposed heavy losses on their enemy, and held out from August 3 to August 27, and in those twenty-four days the town, the fortress and garrison were obliterated. The defense of Longwy deserves a volume to itself. It helped to save Verdun, and Verdun has saved France. D'Arche was able to do more than some of the armies. Thus in Belgium and France the first three weeks of war upset all calculations on both sides.

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With the regular lines of frontier defense completed and manned (intrenched positions starting on the Swiss border and ending with a huge perimeter of outworks around Verdun), and while the First, Second and Third Armies were carrying out their ill-fated offensives beyond, mobilization was giving Joffre forces to build up a line with field armies which he deployed northwest across the Belgian frontier, to meet the menace of the huge forces gathering there to invade France. De Castelnau had extended his left toward Verdun, where the garrison curved round the position and formed the link with the basic units of the Third Army which was facing northeast. General Sarraill took command when its offensive failed.

At Givet the Fifth Army had gathered on the Meuse under its senior general, soon replaced by General d'Esperey. This force was moved over westward, and the Fourth Army under General Langle de Cary was built up between its right and the Third Army. These field armies, a total of ten corps, were composed of various units including the Moroccan and two Algerian divisions brought up from Africa and later stiffened by the splendid Ninth and Eighteenth Corps. Compared to their opponents, they were skeleton forces, for mistakes, confusion, and the result of years of economy in lesser equipment had retarded the mobilization of the



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French Reserves, though the work was more efficient than was generally expected.

Every German's complete equipment was assembled and ready. Thirty minutes after muster, reserve regiments could fall in, in heavy marching order. The French system was more cumbersome. But while the Belgians were closing their first campaign, a thin French line was extended from Verdun northwest through Charleroi, along the Sambre, with a cavalry division operating farther in Belgium. The last two French corps only reached the front on August 19.

The British regular army, which had landed in France, now sent up two army corps to add other sections to the French left, extending the line from Binche west of Charleroi through Mons to Conde. Had there been time another French army, the Sixth, gathering at Amiens and Rouen, would have come up on the British left, carrying the line toward Lille, where the garrison was covering important roads from Brussels to North France.

With six corps on a war footing in his frontier armies, Joffre had flung them forward as strategic advance guards to engage the enemy with least delay, to force the development of their forces, to deal swift blows and then retire, fighting delaying actions, with rear-guard tactics, while the French Reserves were mobilized. But French strategy was mainly defensive. German mobilization had been

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too rapid to allow these plans to develop, however. The initial cost was also too great. And the line across Belgium was inadequate to hold the front and had no time to intrench.

At Dinant on August 15, a French force from Givet had surprised and driven back part of the Saxon Army which was the first pivot, and inactive while the armies on its right fought and changed front. But this was a big affair of outposts. The third week of the war was closing when the Kaiser, impatient at the delays, gave the word from the Grosses Hauptquartier for a general assault on France by all the armies on the stupendous front. The army in Alsace achieved some advantage, until the French were reorganized under the one-armed hero, Pau. Rupprecht of Bavaria rushed his masses forward, after the capture of Luneville, to achieve failure before Nancy. Above Nancy some ground was gained and a wedge driven below Verdun by the Metz garrison forces. With huge losses, the German Kronprinz hurled the Fifth Army against the French forces above Longwy and drove them back, though the fort and its plucky garrison continued their isolated resistance.

The Wurttemberg army and Saxon forces on the right were now closing to the Meuse, leaving the French Third Army to retire at leisure. But west of the river the great armies of von Buelow and von Kluck were conducting operations more imminently

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vital to the fate of France. If Namur could have held out like Liége, there might still have been time to defend the river adequately, to use the Meuse and the forts as a wedge to divide the German line. Von Buelow had flung his Guards at Charleroi on August 20, and for three days the African contingents had hotly contested its possession. While the British were moving into place, the French had twice fought their way back to be expelled, though they still held grimly to the outskirts. And there could be no general advance from Belgium while Namur held. But concentrated artillery fire blew huge gaps in its outer defenses, enabling German and Austrian siege howitzers to close in on the main fortifications, which were literally blown to pieces in twelve hours, opening the chief barrier to the north frontier. One of the most famous fortifications in Europe, Namur, collapsed like a stronghold of sand just as von Kluck was free to march south. On the left of the thin French line, on the Sambre, the Chasseurs à Pied, an infantry brigade, the Twenty-seventh Dragoons and a few field batteries, were vainly trying to hold the river against the Seventh Army Corps and the Twenty-fourth Regiment of artillery with every *abtheilung* concentrated on the French guns. An ominous gap existed also between the French and British.

The French staff had greatly underestimated the number of German troops in Belgium. Not only

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were all the reserve corps fully mobilized and ready to coöperate, but the Ninth Army, including effective forces of Landsturm and other units, had reached the front by August 20 to encompass the Belgian army in the Antwerp district and to garrison the various towns. The five main armies therefore had now wheeled into line and closed on the open frontiers of France in full strength, utterly unaffected by the invasions of Alsace and Lorraine and enormously superior to the Franco-British field forces opposing them.

In Hainaut province are the only clean coal districts in the world. The *borains* were chiefly at the front, but Mons, the neat, if ancient, capital, was spending its Sunday quietly. The beautiful *carillon* in the *beffroi* marked the hour of special services in the cathedral, where crowds of women and the aged prayed for Belgium. There was no band concert in the Grande Place August 23, but half the town was there discussing the war news, and greatly excited by the scouts and dispatch riders who dashed through the streets. For many anxious days the Belgians had endured suspense. Now the French had come up and the British army was arriving. The citizens argued that the Germans in Brussels would soon be wasting their time before impregnable Antwerp, and the enemy, if they succeeded at Namur, would pass to France down the direct roads there, and leave them unmolested.

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The German advance cavalry had formed a screen of reticence, scores of suspects were executed, and no definite news had come through. But troops by the hundred thousand had poured into Belgium, and the German columns, tireless and seemingly endless, were tramping steadily down the Route de Brunhilde where Roman legions had swarmed before them. And by every other road to France the dull gray columns now moved like a great inundation.

On the British front, on Saturday and early on Sunday, as the troops were arriving, reports came in which indicated that only two German army corps with cavalry were advancing down the roads from Brussels. The British were on the line behind the canal from Conde through Mons—and eastward to Binche where the cavalry division kept in touch eastward with the French at Fontaine toward Charleroi. On the extreme left a single battalion of the Scottish Black Watch guarded the road to Lille, at Tournai, oldest of Belgium's towns. As the Third Corps had not arrived, the British had no reserves, but no general attack was expected while Namur held.

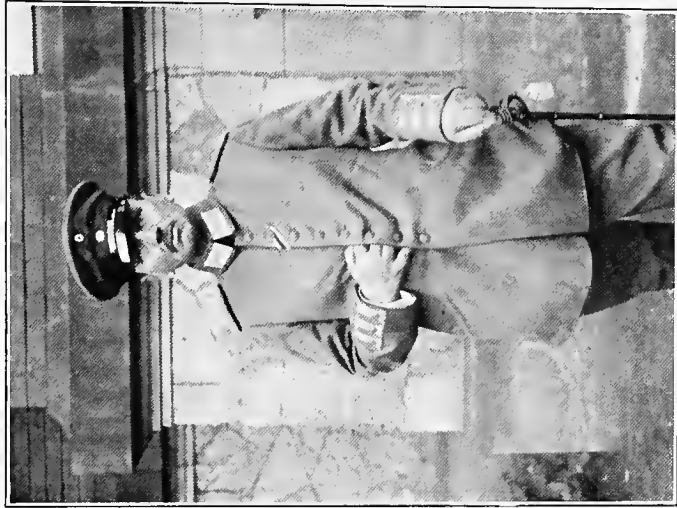
The British regular troops in Belgium were only one brigade more than four infantry divisions of 12,000 men, with the regular equipment of artillery and engineers, and five brigades of cavalry. But they were highly trained professional soldiers. On the British right two regiments had just arrived, tired out after forced marches with extra ammuni-

tion, and were preparing to bivouac. Other troops were coming to cement the line with the French, when patrols came in to report that heavy columns were moving to strike between the British and the French forces. A rain of shells along the right wing announced an advance from the northeast.

Aëroplanes now reported that both the armies of von Kluck and von Buelow were advancing in force. Von Kluck's right had moved down the Lille roads and turned southeast, with the single battalion of the Black Watch, their two machine guns and one battery, to face this entire wing and keep it from enveloping the British left. Thus the two British army corps were to face the entire First German Army, while the right of the Second Army was aiming at their flank and had moved between them and the French. Under a terrific shelling the newly arrived battalions on the British right, the Royal Irish and the Suffolks, extended, scratched a light trench under fire, and poured volleys into the massed columns of Germans, which advanced as steadily as on parade and came within a few yards of the British lines before they were broken, and retired. The British cavalry then charged but were soon checked by machine guns, as a second wave of gray advanced against withering volleys until pitchforked back by British bayonets. At five o'clock news came that Namur had fallen the night before and that the French armies had retired over the Sambre.



"EIN STÜCK PAPIER."—VON MOLTKE AND VON  
BETHMANN-HOLLWEG, WHO PLANNED THE  
MARCH ACROSS BELGIUM



GENERAL VON KLÜCK





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Diverting his cavalry and one corps to work round the British left flank and cut off retreat, von Kluck now brought his main columns against the center and left of the greatly outnumbered British, and by sunset the entire line was hotly engaged facing a concentration of 600 guns. The outposts stood like a rock beyond the Mons canal, and the battery which supported them lost all its gunners before the advance fell back, dragging the guns by hand. The engineers then blew up the bridges.

From Tournai, the Scotch battalion on the flank, sending futile appeals for help, held out grimly until their ammunition gave out, and after dark a few survivors escaped, the battalion having been overwhelmed and annihilated. With the French retirement on the right, both British flanks were now exposed, and although urgent orders were sent to the garrison at Lille to move out to cover the left, alarming cavalry screens on the direct Lille roads led General Percin to hold his forces to protect the city. For this course he has been severely disciplined, since it menaced the safety of the entire line. As Uhlans actually rode into Roubaix, the general deserves great sympathy.

To clear its flank the British right had now fallen back to higher ground, holding stubbornly to every scrap of cover, and inflicting heavy losses as it retired. But the Second Corps was unable to conform. Searchlights lit up their lines, and it was

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nearly daybreak, after several charges by Ferguson's cavalry, before the exhausted left could disengage itself and fall back, cutting its way through hostile cavalry in the rear.

Von Kluck, von Buelow, von Hausen and the Duke of Wurttemberg were all striking in force at the Allied line across south Belgium. Strong columns had poured across the famous industrial district of La Centre down the roads to Binche, Fontaine and Charleroi, still partly held by the African troops. The French line had made a gallant stand all Saturday night, but the Fifth French Army was then weak in artillery and unwilling to intrench to lose mobility. As the attack was developed it was forced back steadily between Charleroi and the Meuse, facing the heaviest losses in the war. Below Namur, near Dinant, the French had held their own through Saturday and Sunday, though the Germans were pouring across the Meuse at Huy. Wurttemberg and Saxon armies drove at the thin French line and in repeated blows forced a retirement of the Fourth Army across the river. Here fierce fighting took place near the old trap or *trou* of Sedan, but with French batteries on the heights inflicting a heavy toll where German guns forty-six years before had crushed the French. Thirty-three massive bridges on the Meuse south of Namur, were defended by French guns and *mitrailleuses*, and for each the Germans faced heavy losses, only to have the structures blown up suc-

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cessively as their masses gained possession. And at all these points the enraged invaders sought revenge on the civil population, and gave no quarter to devoted detachments cut off across the river. Superior in numbers and organization, however, and with innumerable pontoon trains, the avalanche of gray moved steadily across the Meuse Valley, pushing the French back southwest.

Further west artillery finally drove the French from the slag heaps south of Charleroi. For three hours one force made a desperate stand at the canal bridge before the railway station, but was finally shelled out, and the line had to retire through Marchiennes, Landelis and Montignies. Repulse followed repulse. After very heavy fighting on the Semois River and in the Ardennes, by Sunday night the sadly mixed field armies, greatly outnumbered, were holding a very irregular front back in France again, partly through a lack of trained coördination of units in the overwhelming onslaught.

The stupendous and complete mobilization of the German army, and its concentration at every necessary point were feats beyond the range of conjecture. In the Spanish War, two months of hostilities found only Shafter's army, equaling a single European division, and poorly equipped, ready for service. Three weeks of this war saw Belgium overwhelmed, and the German army, replete in detail from the siege trains down to licorice to prevent

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patrols from coughing, with every preliminary finished, taking a vigorous offensive entirely on alien soil. Eliminating the help of the Belgians and British, the first German plan could not have failed. Von Kluck had four active and one reserve corps and special divisions of cavalry; von Buelow, the Guard Corps and two active and two reserve corps and siege trains; von Hausen, three corps, a total of 600,000 men and 2,000 guns. In the center two armies with eight corps were closing in on open France east of Givet, and eight corps and special artillery were also over the Franco-German frontier.

This critical August Sunday proved an anxious day for Joffre. His Intelligence Department tardily announced the general advance of von Kluck and von Buelow, in far greater force than he had anticipated. News of the sudden fall of Namur had opened the day. His offensives everywhere were breaking down. The retirement of the French lines on the Sambre and the loss of Charleroi were reported, with the news of checks or serious reverses from Dinant to Neufchateau, and nothing but discouragement from De Castelnau and along the entire eastern front. In Alsace, Mulhausen had been evacuated. Joffre was forced to advise the British to retire to conform with the Fifth Army, which had fallen back through Beaumont, its left toward Maubeuge.

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When the British had retired fighting into France to the line Valenciennes-Maubeuge, the left practically enveloped, the French Commander-in-Chief had to think and act quickly. He might order a desperate stand along the north frontier, a hazardous attempt to save France, or he could sacrifice valuable territory by drawing back the lines to more favorable positions, and thus keep his forces intact. This was the great principle of French strategy always. Verdun must be held at all costs, and the flank of the barrier forts protected. But he ordered the field armies to pivot back steadily, their right on the fortress, their front unbroken. For a rough idea set a clock at five minutes to five, call the hour hand the barrier forts, Verdun the center. Now move the large hand, the field armies, back to between eight and nine, Paris, and you cover the strategic retreat from Belgium to the Marne.

Pouring around the British left, von Kluck vainly strove to crumple the line against Maubeuge and von Buelow. Envelopment, as of Bazaine in 1870, was averted only by fierce British and French cavalry charges, and the retirement was resumed.

Withdrawal was humiliating, but Germany's "defensive" war was the advance of a marvelous military machine, geared entirely for the offensive. Horse, foot and guns were perfectly equipped and trained, an army stiffened with thousands of machine guns, preceded by a cloud of aëroplanes, backed

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by heavy artillery of unprecedented mobility and power and intrenching machines, followed by field kitchens in hundreds, wireless outfits, field observatories, motor and horse transport, and effective ammunition trains.

The Allied line swung back across the districts all tourists know so well. The British right under Haig, fighting a rear-guard action, fell back through the Mormal Forest, the heavily involved left conforming more slowly. Late on the 25th the reserve division was rushed from the coast and a determined stand was made on the road from Cambrai through Le Cateau to Landrecies, where the narrow streets ran with blood and were choked with dead and wounded. Stiff fighting developed also at Solesmes, where an infantry division was enveloped and cut its way out. The Guard Cavalry caught the British Twelfth Brigade, and its mad charge was broken only at the muzzles of the rifles on the reserve line.

Tired when the running battle opened, the British fought from midday of the 21st through the night, without food or rest, retiring eighteen miles. With only emergency rations they fought the second day and through the second night, and retired fighting twenty-six miles. Then without respite they fought again and retired thirty miles to the Somme. But Sordet's cavalry, by forced marches, now helped the British left; and from Amiens General d'Amade and the Seventh Corps reserves had moved eastward and

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checked the flanking cavalry, giving the exhausted British time to drop in their tracks and snatch a few hours' sleep between Peronne and St. Quentin, and then reorganize their broken and mixed formations, after four days and nights of battle.

At Maubeuge von Buelow left his heavy artillery and reserve divisions to reduce the fortress. Here the British and French had detached single battalions to reënforce the garrison, which made an heroic defense and held out until September 7, when the heavy howitzers, their concrete foundations treacherously ready, pounded the citadel and forts to pieces, suffocating most of the garrison. With hundreds insane from their frightful experiences, many complaints have been made of their treatment by the survivors. The daughter of the Prince de Polignac, who fought in the Civil War, wife of the artist and socialist, Count de Chabannes, and a composer of note, heroically endured the siege, attending the wounded. For some reason this talented lady was held a close prisoner by the Germans, and wounded survivors sent to Torgau bitterly complained of the severity and intolerance of their Reservist jailer, Professor Brandes, the naturalist.

Right along the line, the Germans continued to force the Allies back. A firm stand was made on a line north of Fourmes, by the First and Third Corps, Fifth French Army. At Guise also this army, re-enforced, fought back brilliantly, relieving heavy

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pressure on the British forces retiring from St. Quentin, and luring the Guard Corps close to screened batteries which drove them back and definitely checked pursuit for three days. The Third Army struck the forces of the Crown Prince heavily northeast of Verdun and again on the Meuse, withdrawing across the river and conforming to the line unmolested.

The end of August found the Allies approaching the celebrated La Fère-Laon-Rheims barrier, with a few obsolete forts and no preparations for defense. Here, if anywhere, the world expected Joffre to make a stand, if Paris was to be saved. To the French Commander, the safety of his army was his first consideration. While the Wurttemberg forces had countermarched wastefully to conform to the antics of the Crown Prince, who was still making blunders north of Verdun, von Hausen, with the three Saxon Corps and cavalry of the Third Army, had pushed south in an amazing march, a wedge which got between and threatened the flanks of the Fourth and Fifth French Armies, when both were engaged. He soon crossed the Aisne near Château Porcien below which Rheims was the prize, and von Buelow with five corps was approaching Laon, invaluable as a railroad junction in German hands. Their advance hurried the French to the line where they expected to stand.

But von Kluck had now marched his five corps across open ground below Compiègne; his cavalry



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corps had already swept across the Oise through Senlis. The left of the Allies was again in grave danger, and von Kluck was rapidly moving his army around the flank to cut off effectively the lines from Paris. Retreat was again imperative. A splendid natural line of defense had to be abandoned. Rheims was lost, and the direct roads to Paris were unrecovered, while the Allied field armies fell back to a front resting on Bray, Nugent, Arcis sur Aube, Vitry, Bar le Duc and Verdun. Their left was on the Paris defenses; the line extended due east with the right wing curved sharply north and hinged on the fortress. The line had been bent in and distended where the Fourth and Fifth German Armies had pushed south between Vouziers and the Meuse, passing west of the fortress, through the Argonne.

Von Kluck's advance had been magnificent. By forced marches, occupying all the towns en route, including beautiful Amiens, he had given the Allies no rest. His forces had been generally humane in France, except at Senlis, where the rue de la Republique was destroyed. Many priceless treasures were also taken from the Museum, and some citizens were executed because one crazed patriot, in full view, fired a shot.

During this tedious retreat the Germans had also suffered. At inviting positions along the front the Allies would make apparent stands which sent the

systematic Germans through all their textbook formulæ of battle. At the final stages the assaults proved the enemy to be mobile units, horse artillery, machine guns in motors, and cavalry acting as infantry, all of which melted up side roads and overtook the main bodies whose retirement they were covering. On the Aisne, the British and French destroyed the bridges and inflicted heavy losses on the Germans as they erected and crossed on pontoons. The British left finally rested at Lagny on the eastern section of the Paris defenses, the Germans halting on the Marne.

Paris had vigorously prepared for a siege. The guns could be heard from the suburbs, and the government had moved to Bordeaux. The labor unions had contributed 5,000 exempts to help the garrison, and men of every class seized axes and shovels until at the outworks a circle of trenches, ramparts and barbed wire, 60 miles across and 200 miles in extent, surrounded the city, to avoid the close investment of 1870. Beautiful suburbs were razed to clear artillery ranges, a light railroad joined the important defenses, and in the perimeter droves of cattle and sheep were gathered. General Gallieni had a field garrison of 200,000 men. But the Germans considered Paris theirs. The American Embassy in Berlin was especially consulted in regard to a plan to enable Americans to leave en masse when the city was captured.

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On September 3, Joffre, deciding to bring the German line over the Marne, instructed the British to change front by retiring twelve miles, and the Fifth Army also retired from the Marne to the Seine Valley. Completely misled by this further withdrawal, von Kluck moved his Second Corps and Fourth Reserve Corps to the Ourcq, and turned his main columns southeast along the roads through Meaux to break up the left of the "retreating" armies and cut them definitely off from the capital, which would then be open for his reserves and the siege guns already en route, to start investment. With the armies cut off from her aid, and with the lessons of Liége and Namur, the Germans gave Paris a week to withstand the howitzers. Their forces poured over the Marne in triumph, facing heavy losses in crossing, but lured to overconfidence by the fact that the Allies were abandoning the river and the final line that could defend the capital. Where now could the forces stand? For the second time every German army on the vast front united for a combined offensive. This time they were confident of a crushing decision. And von Kluck, ignoring the "shattered" British, was making an oblique march across their front, closing in to drive, like a battering-ram, at the weak link between them and the French left, to crumple D'Esperey's flank eastward when the frontal attack was delivered against this Fifth Army by von Buelow and superior

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forces. Before von Kluck's columns had cleared the river, the British had closed over eastward, their right solidly in touch with the Fifth French Army. On this day German cavalry were at Gonesse, eight miles from Paris, a part of the widely extended mounted forces led by von Marwitz.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ALLIES STRIKE BACK

WE must not forget that all the armies engaged in France were playing their part in one stupendous battle. This is generally overlooked. The action of all the forces involved in the first and second phases of the German offensives was coördinate. Glancing along the line from Switzerland north, around Verdun, and west to Paris, the first week of September found the stage set for what seemed to promise a triumph for the German armies as they were readjusted for a general attack. In Alsace, though the French had again occupied Mulhausen where the son of Dreyfus was promoted for gallantry, the special field army was recalled August 28, and sent to strengthen the French center, leaving the Belfort command to hold its defensive lines from the Swiss frontier over the Thann district, through the Vosges, across the approaches to Colmar. General Dubail and the First Army fought stubborn battles with the Seventh Germany Army, now occupying the ruins of St. Dié and other frontier towns along the Meurthe, and aiming at Toul through Charmes, where the French could not be shaken.

On Dubail's left, De Castelnau was holding the Second French Army firmly around Nancy from Rosières west of Luneville north toward Verdun, assailed first from the south, east and northeast, and then from the north, where the garrison army from Metz had driven the wedge from Pont à Mousson across the Moselle toward the Meuse between Verdun and Nancy. Flushed by early successes, eager to play his part in the brilliant work of the armies sweeping across France, the Crown Prince of Bavaria had attempted to force the famous Trouée of Mirecourt, south of Nancy, feinting also along the front, and moving strong columns well north of the city along the roads running from Metz to Toul. Covering a rough semicircle, these forces invited reprisal against their right center. De Castelnau led his regiments from the heights into the valley, struck hard before Amance and drove the Bavarians back to the frontier. But the importance of holding the defensive barrier intact, the menace to his flank from Luneville, and the presence of many heavy batteries which were pushed out from Metz toward Pont à Mousson, demanded caution. De Castelnau, therefore, recalled his forces when they had practically broken through the Bavarian front, and not without mutterings from men high in command, placed his splendid corps back on the strong position extending from Pont à Mousson across the plateau of Amance, along the Grand Couronne, curving before the city

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and circling south over the lower wooded hills of Crevic and Vitrimont, to join the left of the First Army, a front of twenty-five miles.

With effective preparation, the Bavarians now brought up 380 siege guns, and, while the Marne fighting developed, they opened September with a terrific bombardment of the main position before Nancy, which was continued for eight nights and days. The French improvised carriages for a few position-guns from Toul, but they could do little to meet this concentrated fire. They held their ground, however, and cleverly screened their outclassed .75's to check massed attacks, which were soon aimed at various points of the position.

Heavy shelling finally blew the outer French positions to pieces. Outlying defensive villages were stormed and heavy forces pushed down the main Nancy road to Champenoux, and deployed in the woods close to the foot of the plateau of Amance, the main defense northeast of the city. Then Pont à Mousson fell, and the heavy artillery from Metz closed in on the north. De Castelnau had also been obliged to lose Foch and some of his finest troops to strengthen the French center below Rheims, just as the Germans pushed in round Amance. On September 7, coincident with the combined assault on the other fronts, the final attack on Nancy was started.

Attacking at every point, the strongest section of the assault was delivered against the heights of

Amance, and the French were driven from their trenches along the foot of the plateau. All night the guns thundered while the French reserved their ammunition, enduring heavy losses from the concentrated artillery. On September 8 successive masses of twelve picked battalions formed in the woods before Amance, to storm the shaken final lines on the hill. Not a shot was fired as they advanced with bands playing. "Fire when the first line is at two hundred yards," was the order in the silent French trenches where every gun and rifle was ready, and glasses showed crack cavalry waiting on the main road from Château Salins, a mass of white and silver. The Guard Cuirassiers were in full dress; the Kaiser was waiting for the signal for a state entry to Nancy.

The Emperor had planned to lead his victorious troops, by the triumphal arch of Stanislas, to the Place Carrière, to impress the captured populace by a review down Le Pepinière, with headquarters at the Governor's palace. But with their batteries pushed well over the Moselle on the north, and an incredible burst of heavy shells along the east front to pave the way, mass after mass of devoted German infantry were going to their death in a futile effort to wrest the final victory under the eyes of their Emperor. Line after line was shot to pieces when the trenches on the Amance slopes broke their silence. Masses of Bavarians went boldly over the Bois de





A GERMAN COLUMN MARCHING TO DEFEAT AT NANCY UNDER THE  
KAISER'S EYE



AN OCCUPIED VILLAGE SHELLED BY FRENCH GUNS, WHICH HAVE  
RESPECTED THE CHURCH



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Crevic, entire regiments of Saxons disappeared down the wooded slopes of the Moselle Valley, and only wounded men that were humanely dragged from the barbed wire by the French could tell the story. The defenders stood like a rock on their main position.

More than 4,000 dead lay before the Amance section alone, when the Kaiser drove sadly and silently away just as news of checks to five other armies reached him. The French had lost heavily also, but they had saved the gate to France, and a week later the Germans retired to their own frontier. Success would have entailed the loss of Toul and Verdun, breached the frontier barrier, and opened a direct road from Germany to take in rear the French armies along the Marne line facing north.

On the east front, though part of the First and Second French Armies had sacrificed fifty per cent of their strength in the terrific fighting of French Lorraine, few details beyond terse official dispatches have appeared in the American press, and from German sources there has been an ominous silence. Yet here were fought the greatest battles of the first campaign, and the heavy forests of French Lorraine cover the horrors of its first stages of primeval ferocity.

With the army from Metz checked along the lines north of Nancy, and held off by forces on the sector southeast of Verdun, the Germans maintained a

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strip between the two which entered France like a wedge along the Valley of the Rupt de Mad across the Moselle toward the Meuse at St. Mihiel, aiming at Fort Troyon, which endured a terrific bombardment for weeks, though the garrison clung to the outworks and refused eight offers for capitulation.

With the Bavarians continuing the line above this wedge, along the east front to Verdun, with outposts circling ineffectively round the north of the fortress, facing the big loop of defenses manned by the garrison, the parallel fronts of the rival armies were continued southwest of the fortress, where Sarrail with the Third Army was opposing the forces of the German Crown Prince. The defense of Longwy, lasting a week after Namur's fall, had released the other German armies, had led to some reckless infantry assaults, and much criticism of the royal general's tactics. Moving picture cameras have faithfully recorded every branch of this spectacular soldier's direction of battles. For the film he regulated the fire of field batteries, and led a stirring advance of Hussars, considerably pulling in his charger if its impatience led it out of focus, forgetting that even an actor-general would sometimes look toward the enemy instead of posing. I saw this official Lichtspiel recently with privileged neutrals in Holland, who inconsiderately roared with laughter at the postures of this vulpine-faced prince, who seems to have inherited little of the ability of

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the Kaiser. The brain of his army has been Count von Haeseler, the famous cavalry leader of 1870.

The German Embassy in Washington issued a dispatch on August 25 announcing that the Crown Prince had "decisively defeated" "five" French Army Corps, and that he now definitely stated that the "French were unable to face the terrific fire of German infantry." As the defeat at Neufchateau was inflicted by the help of the troops of Albrecht of Wurttemberg, it is evident that Sarraill's masterly change of front at Verdun had completely misled the Crown Prince to the claim of a decisive victory. When the army of His Imperial Highness had obliterated Longwy, with its single battalion and obsolete forts, and had looted the frontier district, shooting the insolent civilians who objected, it crossed the Meuse, eager and anxious to earn more tangible laurels.

After the failure of the offensive toward Luxemburg, Sarraill had taken command of the Third French Army. Without heavy artillery, the field guns of the Thirtieth Artillery regiment had coolly faced the superior batteries of the Crown Prince as the French forces withdrew and moved west of the Meuse, to form line with the other Field Armies. On the Chiers, then crossing the river at Dun, dealing swift blows and retiring rapidly, by August 28 the Third Army was able to regain touch with the Fourth Army on its left, which was reforming on the

line Buzancy-Bouvellemont after dealing two blows which checked the Wurttemberg forces. These armies now had to conform with the Allied left in the general retirement already described, and Sarraill soon had to face the difficult task of keeping his right firmly on the Verdun field works, while his left retained touch with the other armies as the line pivoted back to Paris. He formed the hinge and, as the extreme left was forced back rapidly, he was obliged to retire at an acute angle through Varennes, Clermont and Vaubecourt before the Crown Prince.

Sarraill could not risk a decision, so he engaged the Crown Prince chiefly with field artillery, and side-stepped before the efforts to turn his left, which lured the main columns through the Argonne forest too quickly for the heavier German guns to keep up. The situation was dangerous, however, for while it relieved direct pressure on the Verdun garrison, and brought the whole Fifth Army too far south to retain touch with the Bavarians on the semicircle of defenses above the fortress, Sarraill's line was pivoting back ominously near the Meuse, and he had only two corps to deploy on his widening front, against any point of which the Crown Prince could deliver strong blows from his army, the Sixteenth, Eighteenth and Twenty-first Corps and special units.

Recall also that the Metz forces from the east front were driving in a wedge westward between Verdun and Toul, toward the Meuse, its apex point-

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ing toward Sarrail's rear across the river. If the Crown Prince could break through the line, he could join hands across the Meuse with the Metz forces and isolate Verdun and all the French forces above the junction. For a short time he had three 280 guns firing over Sarrail at Troyon, when it was crumbling from the artillery of the Metz forces on the other side. This was the basis for the claim that Verdun was surrounded and the Verdun-Toul barrier breached. But overconfidence led the Crown Prince to develop his attack as far south as Revigny, where the French left suddenly stood firm. Sarrail was now facing west, his right wing resting along the Meuse heights, fighting back to back with De Castelnau's left on the east front. Linked by the Verdun garrison these forces formed the lower sides of a huge inverted "U" round the fortress, De Castelnau fighting the Bavarians who faced west, while Sarrail was engaging the Fifth Army which faced east, the Verdun position extending like a huge peninsula of tangled field works and defenses between them. Sarrail's elastic left was now resting near Bar le Duc, thirty miles below Verdun, where the Allied line curved and continued directly west, with Du Cary and the Fourth Army stretched below the Marne Valley opposing the Duke of Wurtemberg's forces, which passing through Vouziers had pushed it through Suippes and west of Chalons and then to Vitry, twenty miles farther south. Continu-

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ing west the Fifth French Army was also well over the Marne, retiring far below Epernay, facing north, but too widely deployed to more than check von Buelow, and uncertain of von Hausen, who had swept below Rheims and Epernay and was consolidating, ready to smash through the line east of von Buelow and roll up the flanks when the final attack was delivered. The British were facing von Kluck, well on the left of the Fifth Army.

Extending along the rear of these forces, via the south fork, the main road from Paris across Seine et Marne to Nancy, gave Joffre splendid communications to rearrange his field forces on a more solid front, while the second great German attack was preparing. He closed up Langle de Cary and the Fourth Army eastward through Vitry toward Bar le Duc, to strengthen the curving junction with the Third Army at which the Crown Prince was aiming. This made room for General Foch and the newly created Ninth Army to form on the left, from Mailly to near Sezanne, west of which D'Esperey's Fifth Army consolidated before Esternay to Courtaçon. The British army, its Third Corps now completed, closed in and carried the compact line west to the Forest of Crécy, south of Meaux, and a few miles from Paris. Conneau's famous cavalry was on the Provins road where the French joined the British. This front between Verdun and Paris covered practically 150 miles. (See Map I, page 26.)



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The *Grosse Generalstab* made the initial error of under-valuation. Berlin jubilantly announced that the Marne was "forced" and that the "fleeing and shattered field armies" of the Allies had been overtaken and would be forced to fight. The entire German line prepared to deliver a crushing blow, every army coöperating, entirely ignorant of the rapid consolidation effected after their air reconnaissance.

A terrific bombardment along the line on September 5 evoked a mild response from the Allies. On September 7 the general assault started. Along the eastern front, notably at Nancy as shown, the French stood fast. On the north front the Crown Prince, losing touch on both flanks in the Argonne, drove in force at Sarrail's line, to break through well below Verdun, and isolate the fortress, by making a junction with the point of the wedge driven in from the eastern front. This attack failed. Everywhere the Allies now held their ground. Attempting to co-operate with the Crown Prince, the Duke of Württemberg attacked westward from the curve where Sarrail's left joined De Cary's Fourth Army, and was definitely checked at Vitry.

The Ninth Army, and the right and center of the Fifth Army also stood firmly, September 7, as the Saxons and von Buelow started their crushing attack from a line from Chalons westward through Vertus, Etages and Champaubert, the moment that von Kluck's advance guard clashed with the left of

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the French above Esternay, where his forces were to smash through to cut off the armies from Paris, and crumple up the flank of the heavily engaged line eastward, while his Reserves watched the capital and the British. It was an arrogant plan in which the tables were completely turned on the First German Army.

The nucleus of the Sixth Army under D'Amade, its chief units still uncompleted or in Paris, had retired through Amiens to the railroad from Rouen. As von Kluck wheeled his army northeast above Paris, advancing down roads which led to what reconnaissance had reported as a vulnerable gap but across which the British were now closing up solidly to the left of the Fifth Army, 5,000 taxicabs rushed regiments from the capital northward. With its original components, which marched nearly forty miles to a battle of six days and nights, the Sixth Army was completed by magic, September 5, on a front from near Meaux up the main road to Ermenonville, through St. Soupplets, at right angles to the main line. Composed of two corps supplemented by five Reserve divisions, a Moorish brigade and a division of cavalry, this army under Maunoury moved eastward against the German flank September 6. The first shot was fired as it struck twelve noon.

Next day von Kluck discovered that he was marching into a trap. His Second Cavalry Division was

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in column on the Coulommiers Road, his Ninth Mounted Division skirting the Crécy forest due south of Meaux. His infantry were pushing south, well east of these flank screens; the Ninth Corps at Rebais, the Third and Seventh on the Petit Morin at Montmirail, and his wagon trains pouring across the Marne near Meaux. He first detached heavy reënforcements to his Reserve Corps on the Ourcq to hold off Maunoury's threat of envelopment from the west. Suddenly he found that the British and the left of the Fifth Army, were marching north, and forcing him to battle far from the ground he had chosen. His forces were in the wide-opened jaw of the Allies—the Sixth Army, the upper maxillary, the British and some French units, the lower. Opened at right angles the jaws were starting to close on a hinge near Meaux. Hesitation would have meant envelopment and defeat. His pontoon bridges gave him a clear path back northward. The Reserves, who had behaved shamefully to women during their halt while Maunoury's surprise developed unheeded on the Ourcq, received reënforcements and fought strenuously to keep the upper jaw from closing. But the Allied forces, which were moving north, flung von Kluck's main army back over the Morin, and he wheeled his columns in precipitate retreat to the Marne.

At Meaux, the angle of the Allied forces, a strong rear guard of all arms intrenched, to enable von

Kluck to get his impedimenta clear of the river. French batteries covered charge after charge of Zouaves and Turcos, and the German artillery retired at a gallop. At bay, the infantry resisted with desperation, and the French Colonials fought also almost to extermination to clear the road for pursuit. Farther west, the Germans stood along the Marne, but were driven back across the river with heavy loss by the British. They destroyed their bridges but General French's army made light pontoons, crossed under fire, and again drove the enemy north.

The corps of the Fifth Army had now wheeled to attack von Buelow's uncovered flank, but the jaws, still wide open, were following von Kluck relentlessly, as on the Ourcq Maunoury was facing east and maintaining the pace north. Once clear of the Marne the British advanced rapidly, smashing rear guards at every vantage point. Their left was soon on the flank of the forces facing Maunoury, and von Kluck's entire army broke north on the 10th, leaving valuable transport, 2,192 prisoners, and thirteen guns to the British credit during the day.

The French cavalry made daring raids along the western line of retreat, harrying transport and capturing much ammunition. On the night of the 9th, after the German aëroplanes had flown north to park, a squadron of Dragoons decided to put out

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the "eyes of the army." They located the park in a field off the main road beyond Viviers, and two *pelotons* dismounted and crept up, but met a withering machine-gun fire. The two remaining *pelotons* charged the guns, losing only eight horses and three men. Led by the sergeant *fourrier*, the troopers with axes smashed nine Taubes, broke the valves of five armored cars, and lit the petrol. As the fire stampeded their horses and brought hostile cavalry up, only ten of the French troopers survived, hiding in the forest while von Kluck's forces retreated and Maunoury's army swept across the Villiers Cotterets.

This raid blinded the tired German columns as they retreated. Overtaxed when the running battle started, the troops made forced marches of forty kilometers. Men died of exhaustion and laggards were shot as examples. Many regiments had only one hour's sleep for three consecutive nights. In a dozen towns and villages I heard the same story — of horses lashed to top speed, of delaying actions overwhelmed by the relentless pursuit, and prisoners too exhausted to be moved. The trails were blazed by abandoned wagons, stalled motor transport and field bakeries with the bread in cinders.

But Nature first, and then Fate, was kind. The Marne gave von Kluck time to organize his retreat. The Ourcq paralleled and protected the most dangerous line of his withdrawal up the Meaux-Soissons

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roads. Then the Aisne ran right across the line of retreat, with serried plateaux on the north bank, Nature's gift of fortresses and moat well rebridged on the roads down which the German legions had swept southward.

As he approached the Aisne von Kluck turned some of his forces northwest through Betz toward Nanteuil, to spread above the French flank and recover the important roads down which his right had advanced. He gave the French a severe check. But he was unable to get west of the Noyon road, though his maneuver caused the rectangular formation of the Allies to open wider and they approached the Aisne almost in line, as he got his exhausted main forces over the river.

Leaving rear guards on the south bank on Mont de Paris near Soissons, and on hills on all other roads, he deployed his army along the heights, his right near Compiègne, his left directly below Laon, and stood at bay. Now Fate was kind. With his western communications barely covered, and much artillery and material lost, diverted or tumbled into rivers to prevent capture, von Kluck at Laon could tap von Buelow's communications. As Maubeuge had fallen on the 7th, the siege guns, intrenching machines, pioneers and reserve ammunition for use against Paris, had reached the city a few hours before he crossed the Aisne. Thus he had important help to intrench and wire his new front, and he could

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use the reserve ammunition of the Second Army to hold the Aisne heights.

The British smashed the rear guards on the south bank late on September 12, to find their quarry at bay in a splendid position across the river, the tails of the columns toiling up the height as a target to the first batteries, which received the fire of siege guns in reply. While the right of the Sixth French Army captured Mont de Paris and regained Soissons, the British without a pause started to cross the river against heights in parts like the Palisades.

Heavy German artillery and machine guns swept the approaches, smashing pontoons and destroying the engineer detachments. But the First Division on the right fought its way across the aqueduct at Bourg. Other forces crossed by rafts and pontoons under heavy fire during the night, and drove the machine guns back to the hills. By sunset on the 13th, after heavy loss, the British army had crossed the Aisne and, in a battle in which the lessons of South Africa bore splendid fruit, the men fought their way up the steep plateau and established themselves along the irregular crest, driving the Germans to the backbone of the position in the teeth of vigorous attempts made to hurl them from the edge to the river below. It was a stupendous feat of arms.

The French army on the left after desperate fighting also forced a passage at Fontenoy and Vic, push-

ing the enemy's right wing back toward the Coucy-Noyon road. But above Soissons the Allied center was checked by a maze of German owned quarries, constructed so that they could be made formidable fortresses in a few hours, with gun emplacements ready.

With disaster on their right the other German armies all paid the penalty of overconfidence. We left von Buelow, von Hausen, the Duke of Wurttemberg and the Crown Prince striking together at the Fifth, Ninth, and Third, Fourth, French Armies. Rheims was a prize, and Epernay and Chalons were among their spoils for a week, when the citizens exercised restraint with ropes at the necks of the mayors, M. Pol Roger, whose brands we know, and M. Servas. Vast stores of luxuries and valuables rewarded the systematic looting of these rich departments, while the forces were consolidated below them for the decisive attack across the comparatively open country between Montmarail and the Argonne. The French everywhere were on positions vastly inferior to those evacuated during their strategic retreat.

For three days the armies were locked in a stubborn battle on a line south of the main road from Paris via Sezanne and Vitry to Bar le Duc. With the Eighteenth disengaged from chasing von Kluck, D'Esperey was able to turn it against von Buelow's exposed flank and smash it over the Marne, garner-



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ing much spoil. But his right, and the left of the Ninth Army, had been forced to give ground before the left of the Second German Army consolidated to wedge at a weak spot detected east of Sezanne. On Foch's right and De Cary's left, the Saxon and Wurttemberg Corps also pushed back the French below Mailly where the ground was impassable, and only the arrival of reënforcements from both Alsace and Lorraine saved the bulges from breaking.

Helped by the splendid Lorraine Corps that he had commanded and trained, Foch, who was fighting three distinct engagements near Sezanne, snatched a double victory by an operation which in detail will form an interesting chapter in new textbooks. Von Buelow's Guard Corps, unable to pierce Foch's center on a ridge and protected by the St. Gond marshes, left a covering line there, and moved over to join the Saxons in smashing his right. With left and right wings both driven far back, Foch turned his well advanced center westward, and fell on the flank of the enemy there, retaking the Château de Mondement. His left now rallied, a maneuver the enemy was forced to withdraw before. Then by night he faced his center from west to east, attacked the flank of the eager Guards and Saxons pounding his right wing, and forced them to fall back. Victory was thus snatched from impending disaster at Fère Champeniose by Foch's superb genius, which here broke the persistent theory of envelopment by

mass on both wings, which marked the strategy of the German generals.

As the Guard fell back in confusion through the swamps of St. Gond, Foch's artillery in the center smashed the retreat to a rout. Von Buelow, Guards and Saxons were now defeated, and by September 10 were retiring full speed to the Marne, leaving General von Schack and many other wounded officers on the field. One Guard regiment had five officers left out of sixty.

The discouraged citizens of Epernay, scraping their francs to pay their last crushing fine, heard a rumbling and rushed out to see the German forces pouring through the city in flight. Von Buelow and von Hausen marched rapidly north, with the French so closely at their heels that the rear guards left on the Marne were overwhelmed before they could prepare to stand. Closely pursued by the Fifth and Ninth Armies, these forces attempted to rally on the hills below Rheims, but the French troops had tasted victory and attacked so rapidly that the German batteries retired at a gallop. Rheims, the best prize of the war, was lost, and the Second and Third Armies in full retreat poured past the city and reached the fortified barrier line, five miles north, where they rallied and intrenched. With his center on the hills above Rheims, von Buelow's right was bent back northwest along the road to Laon, to the Aisne, resting on the Craonne plateau, leaving a

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wide vulnerable gap to von Kluck. His left, east of Rheims, was deployed on the fortified heights of Berru and Nogent, the Saxons continuing the line across the Moronvillers plateau, protecting the upper railroad across the Champagne.

During these kaleidoscopic operations, the Fourth and Third French Armies had played their special part. The Duke of Wurttemberg had essayed the double rôle of joining the frontal attack, and watching the flank of the Crown Prince. During the operations already recorded, De Cary threw the re-enforced Fourth Army vigorously at the forces of the Grand Duke at Sompuis. The fight raged fiercely until the collapse of von Hausen (who was unjustly made the scapegoat for the Guard defeat and summarily retired). This left Wurttemberg's right flank in the air. This Fourth German Army was pressing De Cary hard. His line had been saved by the arrival of a corps sent from the Vosges on the 9th. But he now drove at the exposed right, retook Cermaize and broke the Nineteenth Corps. This wing was forced to retreat along the old Chalons road, and was heavily shelled. There was danger now that the Wurttemberg army might be pushed back northeast along the few main roads that led to the Argonne, already cluttered by the Crown Prince's wagons, so the entire line had to disengage and retire north along poor roads, east of Chalons, which was so hurriedly abandoned that stores of

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French military equipment were left there untouched.

The confusion of the Wurttembergers was increased when their right reached the great maneuver ground of the French army. Every range was known on terrain so familiar to all French troops, and despite its heavy losses the Fourth Army with its guns and cavalry kept the Germans at the double as they retreated across Champagne and conformed to the line of the Saxons and von Buelow.

Having definitely cleared their front, the victorious French troops rapidly reformed for their independent rôle. Though quite out of touch with Foch and with his flank open, De Cary recalled the bulk of his forces, and in echelon pushed his army vigorously at the now exposed flank of the army of the Crown Prince. The entire German front had collapsed section by section, like a house of cards.

Recall that the Fifth German Army, pushing south, had bent Sarraill back sharply from Verdun, until he was at right angles to the general French line and facing west. De Cary's rapid change of front eastward soon left the Crown Prince impotent in a "V," and with more cavalry the French could have surrounded him. He tried first to smash through so as to reach the apex of the wedge driven in from the east front, and cut his way out. Repulsed, he turned in precipitate retreat, losing heavily as he escaped from the cul-de-sac in which he was

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increased through his own blunders. Granting the difficulties of the region, the strategy and tactics of the army led by the Kaiser's son were pathetic, though German history will no doubt be charitable and partial. Rapid marching, and terrain difficult for French artillery, alone saved his army, which fell back to Varennes and Montfaucon though the pursuit ended near Clermont, the French being utterly exhausted. He had thus lost the railway and roads across the Argonne to Verdun and the Third and Fourth French Armies were consolidated on a shortened and straightened front north and west of the fortress.

Eagerly fresh German forces advanced down the salient from Metz, pointed east, south of Verdun. Beaumont was captured, and Troyon again was bombarded and tottering. But no effort now could reach the Crown Prince. On September 23 the Germans did reach the Meuse from the east. St. Mihiel was captured, and a vigorous lunge was made at the rear of Sarraill's line. He coolly detached his cavalry corps held in reserve, and by a surprise drove back the invaders as they debouched. Forces from Nancy also came over and ended the danger. But the Germans maintained their grip on St. Mihiel, the point of a veritable thorn in the side of France, which enormous efforts have failed to expel. Yet below this wedge when the Germans rushed reënforcements to help hold the Aisne, the First and

Second French Armies advanced on the front from Nancy to Belfort, and drove the enemy back to the frontier.

On September 8 privileged neutrals had been taken to the Crown Prince's headquarters to see his drive triumph. A visitor pointed, on the way, to Domremy, Jeanne d'Arc's birthplace, southwest of Toul. The German artillery was pouring shells on the patient French lines, and the Staff was in high spirits. "Our guns will soon be too noisy for angels' whispers in the Chénus," jeered one. "There will be spirits enough there for all the Joans!" added another. "And a much alive *zug* for every girl too!" laughed a third. The Crown Prince was silent. Nancy was to fall that day, and there was no news from his father. Neither had the Trouée of Charmes been forced. So Domremy would hear no guns, for her sons with Dubail had not failed. For days the girls in the famous school by Joan's cottage had prayed, "Save France!" Then they learned that a cheering Vosges corps had been rallied near the village, able to go back to help the army at Vitry. And even the French censors did not suppress the news when four days after Nancy the Crown Prince himself was in full flight. So their faith in their patron saint will never die—these pathetic, earnest little-mothers of France!

During the retreat superb discipline and superior strength of artillery and machine guns saved the

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German armies from complete disaster. With modern weapons rear-guard actions are full of possibilities. But they had played small part in German training, and of all their generals involved in the retreat, von Kluck alone had profited by the lessons taught by the Allies during their masterly withdrawal from Belgium. But once on the Aisne, they could not be dislodged.

Intrenching machines and heavy artillery aided the German Army in its rapid efforts to dig in and consolidate on the new line west of Verdun and along the Aisne. Vast convoys of ammunition were pouring down their lines of communication, while the Allies' stores had been seriously depleted by the drain of the Marne battle. Lack of heavy guns also hampered the French and British Armies, which could make no adequate reply to the heavier calibers of the German artillery.

Except for the artillery battle on the St. Mihiel salient, all operations below Verdun soon relapsed to siege warfare, with the Germans everywhere back on their own frontier. Westward from Verdun the tactics of the Crown Prince were simple. He had uncovered the road and railway through Clermont without an effort, but he dug in on a front from Etain well above the fortress, to Varennes, and at Vienne west of the Argonne forest, and endeavored by siege artillery to break the vital French communications with Verdun which had slipped from his

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grasp. In the forest a series of picturesque and elemental battles raged for weeks, as the Germans attempted to link their divided front, and the French detachments stalked them in the gloomy tangle. Prodigal use of barbed wire and machine guns enabled a rough line gradually to be established while woodland paths were turned into roads. Verdun itself, like Nancy, could hardly hear a German gun, and the great efforts to open these direct gates between France and Germany had failed.

The Wurttemberg army dug in on the right, across the ancient battle ground of Attila, on the providential chalk hills extending across the Champagne Poulleuse and protecting the Bazancourt-Challerange railway. The line rested on the natural ramparts of Tahure, Massiges, Mesnil, and the butte above Souaine (a city they tried to hold but soon lost) to the five-mile ridge above Auberive and the Suippe which was held by the redistributed Saxons and von Buelow, across the Moronvilliers plateau round the hills above Rheims to the Aisne heights.

For several days von Buelow fought back vigorously and fruitlessly to recapture Rheims. Failing in this he made a desperate lunge eighteen miles east of the city, a surprise attack to break the French center and regain Souaine. Burning to retrieve their defeat at St. Gond, the Guards led the attack against the right of their old adversary at daybreak. The French were reorganizing their forces in open



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ground, with their reserves at Souaine. But their advanced posts, supported by heavy cavalry, fought back steadily and made a stand in the barricaded village of Auberive, holding out against overwhelming odds until help arrived. Dragoons with machine guns held one road against seven massed attacks.

While this hornets' nest was checking the onslaught, the French infantry were marching rapidly from Souaine, and the batteries, desperately needed, were cantering up the macadam road in column, a mile beyond their supports, when an aëroplane swooped over and reported that the guns had out-distanced the infantry. A brigade of German light cavalry at once made a detour to intercept the venturesome artillery. The Death's Head Hussars led the attack. Four narrow, screened paths through an abandoned vineyard enabled the cavalry to trot smartly to the flank of the marching batteries, and debouch in squadron columns on the edge of an open field which the road traversed 800 yards away. The long column of guns and wagons moved in a cloud of dust, and the gunners saw their danger only when their mounted flank guards were sabered as the enemy squadrons galloped into line and swept forward. In appalling confusion the batteries halted, unlimbered, and the guns came into action from the road, with intervals choked with limbers, wagons and plunging horses. As the Hussars changed from a gallop to a charge less than 200 yards distant, the

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75's spoke thrice at point-blank range—the race with death was theirs by a margin 'of seconds. The charging line quivered, slowed, and collapsed in pitiful heaps. Victory had slipped from their grasp, as the impetuosity of many officers brought them headlong into the French line.

The scene repeated Balaklava. The shattered squadrons wheeled in confusion and rode madly back to cover, the guns belching behind them across fields littered with dead and dying. The brigade was literally shot to pieces. No poet laureate will immortalize this fight; six lines in the official report covered the entire day's battle.

The batteries were hurried on up the road, where they found their dismounted cavalry nearly enveloped. The Guard Corps made three desperate frontal attacks before Auberive and gained the village before the French infantry could all get up. But with cavalry too shattered to guard their flank, their position was soon enfiladed by Zouaves, who had advanced unseen along the Suippe, and a rapid retirement was necessary. Heavy guns soon battered Auberive to pieces, however, and the French abandoned the exposed position and consolidated their lines above Souaine.

On von Buelow's left, along the Aisne, the army of von Kluck had made a determined fight. With the river directly below him, he never expected that the Allies could cross. When the British fought

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their way over and gained the edge of the ridge, he made desperate efforts to throw them back. But the thin line clung fast. Every man was needed on this precarious front and the British had no reserves. But a brigade of the First Division pushed up the valley of Vendresse through a tempest of fire, and after heavy losses companies of the Northamp-ton, supported by dismounted cavalry, reached the top of the ridge and clung to the ditch on the Chemin des Dames, the road which marked the main German front. They formed the tip of a wedge which aimed at von Kluck's left, straight for the vulnerable gap which at first existed between the First and Second German Armies.

Realizing the danger, von Kluck directed fourteen counter attacks on the vastly outnumbered forces at the top of the valley, all of which failed; and in a drive aimed at the base of this wedge, maintained by Haig, who commanded the British right, the Germans lost a battery and 600 prisoners.

General French sent to Joffre's headquarters for reënforcements to enlarge the wedge. At this juncture De Castelnau was rushing over from Nancy with some of his finest troops. If these corps could have been pushed up in the gap, the Germans admit that von Kluck would have been cut off from the other armies and again forced to retire. But General Joffre decided that De Castlenau's army could be detrained more rapidly farther west toward

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Noyon on von Kluck's exposed right and rear to definitely turn that flank.

So the British held on grimly against repeated assaults, almost expelled by one desperate subterfuge. Stretcher bearers were allowed to approach the head of the valley under the Geneva emblem, to collect the German wounded between the lines; but machine guns were treacherously unloaded from the litters, and a murderous enfilade opened on the British, who had humanely ceased fire and were standing up in their trenches. An attack by masses at once supported this treacherous act; but it failed, and the machine guns were left in the open, with new heaps of German dead.

The British maintained their menace to the gap while De Castelnau's attack was developing, but just as the Sixth Division and heavy howitzers arrived from England, and a Morocco brigade of the Fifth Army came up to support the British wedge, unexpected help reached von Kluck.

Hearing of the Marne defeat, General von Zwehl, left with a Corps of Reservists to garrison Maubeuge and guard communications, made forced marches to Laon without orders. His forces were flung across the gap, linking von Buelow and von Kluck's firmly. For his initiative he was decorated and promoted on the field. Had Maubeuge been able to hold out longer history might have been different. The German front was now solid. As the Sixth Army was

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pushing von Kluck's right wing well north of the Aisne, and De Castelnau was preparing his enveloping movement on the extreme right, reënforcements from every army were shifted over to von Kluck, who built up a rapid curve on his flank and soon masked De Castelnau's advance. These maneuvers definitely turned the lines northward to the vicinity of Noyon.

The battle of the Aisne had now degenerated into a dead-locked front of definite siege warfare. Von Kluck had proved himself a brilliant and resourceful general, superior in strategy and tactics to his machine-made confrères. By a narrow margin he had saved his army from a second retreat, and had thus saved the German line.

## CHAPTER IV

### A MORE PERSONAL VIEW IN PICARDY

LET us take a more personal view of the new phases of the conflict after the stupendous battle of millions had resolved itself into a huge siege operation from Switzerland to Noyon. From September 21 the fighting on the German flank in the districts of Ribecourt, Noyon and Roye, with many interlocking positions and scores of minor battles, was like a game of chess. On September 30 a night attack gave the Germans the heights of Roye and Fresnoy le Grande, northwest of Noyon, and the lines became definitely established on a firm curve northward from the Aisne. Until then no rigid front had been established across this zone. Life and property were nowhere safe, and the farmers in the cultivated forests of the Oise suffered shamefully from German raiding parties foraging at night. The French invariably treated these freebooters as prisoners of war when caught, though, with the Germans, a peasant's frown was a death-warrant. Specific cases of rape and degeneracy, frequent when von Kluck's Reserves were resting on the Ourcq, were repeated on the Oise.

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Checked on the heights of Lassigny, De Castelnau dug in, filled his trenches with territorials and pushed his picked forces to Amiens, to feel again for the German flank. Amade's cavalry reoccupied the St. Quentin roads, menacing important lines of communication, and other forces worked their way up the Somme valley in support. It was impressive to watch the change in the inhabitants of Amiens as the army based there pushed successfully eastward.

After the battle of Moreuil the *Pickelhaubens* of von Kluck's Reserve Corps had goose-stepped majestically down the Rue Jules Barny, when they captured Amiens September 3, Amade retiring through Picquigny. They withdrew with no bands or chorus of *Deutschland über Alles*, horse, foot and guns scrambling out on the 13th when von Kluck's retreat had uncovered the roads from the south. They left huge levies of wine and cigars uncollected, and did not seriously damage the railways, except to blow up one bridge as Sordet's cavalry approached.

With incredible speed the Royal Engineers erected bridges of crib work on the already destroyed structures on the Rouen branch. The French put crossings on the spans they had blown up on the Abbeville section. They were tested for a night by heavy express engines, and within two days the lines to Paris, Havre and North France, of special strategic value, were in operation.

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When I read the proclamations posted up in this district, in German and French—*Bekanntmachung* or *Avis* moderate despite "*Ordnungsgemassen*," "*Nichtbefolgung*," *Polizeiverwaltungen* and *Empfangsbescheinigung*, it was apparent that German soldiers, like those of other armies, reflect the will and desire of their immediate commanders. The orders were different from the rigorous effusions I had seen elsewhere. I made diligent inquiries and emphasize the fact that I did not hear a serious complaint of brutality during the occupation, when Amiens was crowded with women and children from other districts. They took away many young men of the next recruit classes, an act of war, but they purchased instead of looting, and their requisitions were not excessive. General von Stockhausen and M. Fiquet, the mayor, deserve special commendation for their actions in those trying days.

We cannot believe that the people of Picardy are merely more truthful than the inhabitants of other departments, from whom I heard stories of brutality which cannot be swept away as lies or hysterical exaggerations, especially from the towns which were not torn to pieces in conflict, when suffering and horror are unavoidable. In most places the Germans have been guilty of murder and outrage. Many soldiers were paleolithic men; others were degenerates. Fiends were allowed full sway when those in authority were disciples of that pernicious



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doctrine of terrorism and destruction of all spiritual and moral structures; a code of war laid down by leading military writers in Germany. Side by side in Belgium and France you could trace the advance of humane leaders and the ruthless trail of those who had read, unwisely or too well, specific passages of "*Kriegsbrauch in Landkriege*."

I could fill several volumes with the story of German ruthlessness not far away. Of special interest, however, is the treatment of the famous Au Fond des Forêts, the beautiful country seat of Mr. William Payne of New York and his paralyzed wife, at Rosoy on the Oise. The British had camped in their grounds, but not a thing had been touched. Leaving three American flags on the Château and gates, the owners moved out when the Germans approached. The Stars and Stripes were torn down, pinned on the lawn and polluted. The Château was looted from attic to wine cellar, and of the historical furniture, prized library and collection of arms, tapestry, paintings and antiques, everything that could not be sent back to Germany was hacked to pieces. Dead horses were buried in the lawn, stained glass windows of Cucci were smashed, and Mrs. Payne's clothes were looted or torn up. Every bed was polluted. The Château de Chamant, home of Mr. Jefferson Davis Cohan near Senlis, was occupied by von Kluck's staff. The private property of this American was coolly loaded in his own farm wagons

and driven off. Prince Eitel was at the Château Sivier at Choisy near Compiègne. When he left the art treasures were carted away with his baggage. The country seat of a Philadelphia lady was completely looted. Her stock of preserves was emptied and each jar carefully refilled with offal. These are a few instances out of hundreds, but significant because in modern wars neutral flags have generally won immunity for property of foreign residents.

I wish that I could take you through the black ruins of many historic French homes so that you would appreciate the vandalism which characterized the German advance, and the destruction of so much that belongs to history rather than to an individual owner or nation. In an indignant message to the United States, the Crown Prince denied the stories of looting by the German forces in general, and his own command in particular. The treatment of homes of neutral Americans in France is an emphatic answer to his Royal Highness, and on his own front there have been shameful looting and spoliation. Some neutrals have visited the Château de Baye near Champaubert, M. Minnon's Château near Sedan, and a home at Revigny after the Crown Prince had moved his respective headquarters. And the treatment of women by men in his command during the advance of this royal plunderer was far worse than more isolated incidents on the route of the First Army.

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There is a need for moderate statements. But arson, organized pillage and foul pollution characterized the general German advance. The commanders of several army corps also specifically authorized murder and ignored rape, as their masses swept across France. In consequence a million women and children fled in mad terror from the northern departments, enduring terrible hardships and privations, and leaving zones not endangered by battle. "*Es bleibe kein Feind lebend hinter uns,*" was one clause of an order by General Stenger at Thiaville.

Thousands of French troops were soon moving through Amiens to the fighting east of the city, when the flanking offensive was checked and hammered into a French defensive across the Somme valley and the plateau of Thiéval. The campaign was full of exciting and picturesque incidents.

A moving picture of the effect of masked machine guns in checking the second advance of the French near Albert would speak eloquently of many phases of German success. Six hundred dead or frightfully wounded lay heaped in one sunken road along which a comparatively small force had deployed and attempted to sweep over the bank to charge. Verestchagin alone could have painted the scene there. The attacking lines had been instantly swept away when exposed to a cleverly masked company of quick firers, the dead or dying falling back into the road with the survivors who waited until the 75's cleared

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the way, after which some ground was regained.

War is no longer picturesque; but in France military tradition had died hard in a land where the popular will has so frequently swept aside civil tradition. With the exception of the dull linen covers for the headdress, the uniforms for the first few months were the same as those endeared to our hearts by the pens of French writers and the brushes of her artists. There was a puzzling sense of familiarity with every scene, a positive idea that you had participated in it all before.

Let us watch the French near Albert prepare a village for defense—the troops of De Castelnau, the “permanent” general whose popularity is second only to Père Joffre’s, and who has lost his three sons in the war. The artillery behind the hill have dropped from a Berne-Bellecour canvas. A squadron of dragoons are retiring down a road flanked by a canal lined with poplars. The farm, and especially the water, are Thaulow; the rest Beauquesne. Nothing has changed since ’70 except the uniforms of the dejected prisoners who move down the road, and are given milk and wine by the village women—an act of splendid magnanimity from people who know that sympathy from civilians for French prisoners in Germany has been severely punished.

Now a travel-stained regiment of infantry marches up with the loose plodding route-step of the French, denoting a spirit so peculiarly their own. These

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*pioupious* have stepped from the covers of several popular authors—they are old comrades. Some joke, others laugh and sing, and the older men are marked by the dignity and reserve of men uprooted from their homes and families and flung into suffering and endurance, facing a death that few then could hope to escape. The curious tilt-carts driven by standing soldiers are De Neuville; so also are the horse-ambulances driven by “*pantalons rouges*.” The village square bristling with picturesque military preparation is merely a canvas of Edouard Detaille, and when a flock of geese scatter before a group of staff officers who ride up rapidly, and infantrymen drag lumbering farm wagons down to barricade the road against Uhlans and armored cars, the illusion is complete. Your mind can see this just as clearly as my eyes did. Thus art and literature can make the whole world kin.

But the opening roar of guns in the hills brings us back to solid reality as three sweet-faced nuns, in spotless headdress, walk calmly to the church, ready for the wounded, who soon trickle in on stretchers strapped to automobiles, which strike discordant modern notes in the vivid reproduction of the scenes we have stored in earliest memory. Some of the peasants have gone, but many remain, and despite the ruthless destruction a few miles away, and coming nearer, they carry food to the tired patrols and to the hungry prisoners, who are haggard, and some

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of whom are kindly faced fellows to contrast with their blasphemous *Feldwebel* and a group of thugs.

A French sergeant offers to pay, and madame, the mayor's wife, is furiously angry—a village matron, she talks with the dignity of a duchess. A bearded French boy, with sunken eyes that glow like hot coals, replies in a graceful flow of speech which recalls Tellegen with Bernhardt, in "The Christmas Night." The soldiers clap—madame wipes away a tear, and calls them her dear sons. How your heart goes out to these people of France, simple and kind-hearted! The enemy at their throats, they are fighting for their homes, and they are trying to be brave and cheerful when every heart is breaking.

The aëroplanes, another modern note, rush past overhead very low, and above the hill, behind which French artillery is concealed, a large craft appears, shaped exactly like a bird, the wings marked with the Maltese cross. The Taube insists on knowing what is going on, the French machines are lighter and faster, and finally the German reels and slithers sideways to the ground. The soldiers give a reserved cheer; a wagon and ambulance go out. The French machines, however, fly off without waiting—the fight is all in the day's work. And on one hill the Alpine artillery, brought from the Vosges to serve the few heavy guns, are screening their position—bronzed hardy mountaineers in picturesque *barets* and puttees.

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French troops were not in Albert, but the pretty town was battered to pieces at considerable cost for ammunition for its wanton destruction. The beautiful church of Notre Dame de Brebières was left, a sad ruin, with the figure of the Virgin shot away from the tower, but suspended sideways by its tangled supports.

During a prolonged lull, on the first Sunday in October, women and children crept back to the pitiful ruins of their homes to see what they could save. Without warning, shells were flung into them, killing one and fatally tearing a child with shrapnel. It is difficult to find an excuse for these gunners, and less palliation for the shells fired at the motor ambulance which went out for the little girl. It is fair to point out that all vehicles in the French Army carry small flags denoting the corps and branch of the service. It is not always possible to distinguish the Geneva emblem, but the German system gives no benefit of a doubt. In Albert the women, the children and the ambulance were all obvious, however. It was wanton murder.

Two Sundays afterward, when passing again through Amiens, I saw a Taube drop bombs on the Evacuation Hospital on the rue Paul Tellier. One burst in the hospital yard, killing a well-known lady visiting the wounded, and injuring her daughter. The teams of some loaded ambulances stampeded, and each was stopped by French soldiers guarding the

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entrance to the railroad station, quiet, bearded Reservists who caught the horses, adjusted the wounded, and resumed their posts.

At the Champ des Courses an aviation park had just been founded. French aviators pursued the Taube, which dropped a second bomb at Picquigny, where a hundred women were giving water and cigarettes to soldiers, as passing troop trains slowed down to cross the repaired bridges. Many were injured. A warning was telephoned to Abbeville, then held by the London Scottish volunteers, and a visiting British airman went up. The Taube then turned back and a French flier was over it in a flash. Three times the "dove" drove upward, and three times the more rapid Frenchman looped above his rival, firing when his machine righted itself. In five minutes the Taube crashed to the earth, both the occupants being killed.

Apart from their brutal tactics, the scientific efficiency of the German air service is as unquestioned as the bravery of its aviators. In combat they suffered often because of the heavy stability of their machines. But for general military purposes their training was then unsurpassed. In ranging for artillery, they would parallel a position, outlining its confines with smoke bombs or tinsel streamers if sunny, thus marking the sector for their gunners. At night they essayed flights, releasing parachute magnesium flares over bivouacs, parked convoys or



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ammunition trains, and made precarious landing at their base as a rain of shells searched out the lighted position.

The feeding of vast armies in the field is a difficult and complex undertaking. When the German machine became disorganized its efficient kitchen service went to pieces, and the men approached starvation after their emergency rations were devoured. The flexibility of French methods was adaptable to most circumstances. In trench warfare, however, the Germans were at first able to send their *Feldkuchen* nearer the front, while the French broke monotony by alternating platoons for guard, reserve and commissary, so that every third normal day the men got change, exercise, and a hot meal before taking up rations and supplies. An abundant meal of cooked meat, and vegetables, bread, red wine and coffee, was the French staple, helped out with rations of cheese and chocolate. But the people in the district were never too poor to remember their army, and it was touching to see the contributions made by the peasants. I have seen children with loaded baskets trudge along shell-swept roads daily, with gifts for soldiers whom they had never seen.

The fortitude of the French wounded exhibited the most wonderful side of the national temperament, and if you have seen them, you will hiss the next time your intelligence is outraged by the stage

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travesty of a Frenchman, just as you wonder at the popular foreign conception of British officers as monocled donkeys, when you see the modest, clean-cut men who lead their forces at the front. Only swagger German officers now wear monocles.

At first most of the wounds were the clean punctures of the modern bullet. Occasionally the nickel coating becomes damaged and spreads, or the bullet is deflected, and topples in the body, making a frightful hole at egress. Uninitiated at once cry dum dums, but we learned to know these wounds in Cuba and South Africa.

Some German soldiers reversed their bullets and fired them base first. I have never been able to loosen the slightly blunt French bullet, though with the pentacapsular clips of the Mauser bullets can generally be worked loose with the fingers and turned. I have found one clip with three cartridges thus reversed and reset in wax. This would spoil accuracy but inflict a terrible wound.

During September, diabolical wounds from shell fire, indescribably terrible in effect, became common, though considering the persistent hail of heavy projectiles which the Germans maintained on the Allies' positions, the losses inflicted were light. The high-angle howitzers, so potent against fortifications, are jokes when they fall from the clouds into receptive mother earth. With their great weight they burrow

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deeply, and the explosion makes a miniature volcano, dangerous only for those on the crater. A group of Royal Artillery drivers across the Aisne were playing cards when an 11-inch shell dropped among them, tearing off one man's leg. It exploded well underground, and the circle of men were raised, dazed but scathless, on a cone of earth. Only the maimed man lost his life. Bayonet wounds were common in Picardy and generally fatal, owing, it was said, to some preparation smeared on the weapon.

Saber wounds were encountered in volume only during this stage of the war when cavalry charged cavalry, and the Uhlan all-steel lances proved a deadly weapon, though in swordsmanship and shock both the French and British cavalry proved distinctly superior.

It has been said that the training of the French troops was lax. But "*le soldat de demain*" has to face a Spartan course, which is heartbreaking for those lacking virility. For some years the French have been following outdoor sports with avidity, until they have been producing athletes able to compete on equal terms with their cross-Channel neighbors. There is naturally no *tirage au sort* for the present recruit classes. Every lad is anxious to serve, and from the moment that a recruit receives his *feuille de route*, he has the deepest contempt for a *pekin*, as he terms a civilian.

The French army is absolutely democratic, and the

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*Ein Jahr previller* of the German army, which groups some men of superior education, is unknown. The average Frenchman has little use for aristocrats, and the sons of the best families are gruffly patronized by the ordinary private until they forget their airs. From 5 A. M. "reveille" to "retraite" the recruits drill, march, dig trenches, and perform fatigue until dark. For recreation there is setting-up drill and instruction in the *savate*, French boxing, to make the recruits aggressive.

After a course of heavy field training, the class is ready for the third line of the reserve near the front, where the final practice with the long French rifle at a changing silhouette target, and route marches of twenty miles with full equipment, often under shell fire, graduate the *pioupiau* to the front line, where his average term of life proved short in the terrible early days. Ask them if they are downhearted. "*C'est la vie, que voulez-vous?*" They have little need to study their military code, "Moral duties of a soldier." Since the war, many regiments have had no cases of *arrêts de rigueur*, and the *priccoteur*, or shirker, has disappeared.

A glance at their towns occupied only by youths and women bravely trying to be cheerful, tells one story. But in the churches their mask is discarded, and life can never be the same again to those who have seen the packed rows of kneeling figures, who may never know the fate of their loved ones, but

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who supplicate silently with faith when the shadow of death is on their hearts, or chant the national prayer, “*Sauvez la France, ne l’abandonnez pas,*” majestic in its simplicity.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GERMAN FLOOD FLOWS NORTH

It was soon evident that De Castelnau's effort to turn the German flank near St. Quentin, late in September, and cut their main communications crossing France from Belgium, had failed. Amade's cavalry was pushed northwest by the Hessian Division that marched up through Chauny and Ham against Peronne, the advanced French base which was lost in attacks from the south and east. The enemy marched west in force on both sides of the Somme, and a furious battle raged east of Amiens. Wounded poured into the city, windows shook with gun shock, and for two days the people expected the Germans to return any hour.

French reënforcements raced up from Beauvais, adding to the barrier of flesh and blood opposed to a hail of steel. All roads to the front were swept by heavy shells. From the hills little could be seen to define the situation. The German lines could be traced only by patches of vapor and upturned earth, but the French lines, on lower ground, were marked in red and blue, the fatally conspicuous uniforms making an obvious target. Their front seemed strangely silent and thin under heavy pun-

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ishment. But as soon as gray masses rose to storm the crumbling French line, they were swept away by rifle and machine-gun fire, and field guns which were outclassed in the artillery duel but terribly effective when the battle developed.

The German pressure soon spread above the river to the plateau of Thiepval. The Guard cavalry raided La Boisselle, and De Castelnau's right, extending between Albert and Bapaume, was soon pushed back to the Amiens-Douai road. Here were fought the most brilliant cavalry actions of the war. The Chasseurs d'Afrique debouched suddenly before the Imperial Dragoons at the halt. *Serrez les rangs!* sounded, but the stirring notes of the charge, and conflicting German orders to the horse artillery and the troopers were drowned by the thunder of hoofs. Gunners were sabered as they came into action; the speed quickened from 500 to 600 paces as the French cut their way through the irresolute dragoons. Reforming under heavy machine-gun fire, with only one *Chef d'Escadron* left, the French cavalry wheeled to the flank of the field batteries in action near Fricourt and charged the artillery supports. The guns limbered up and retired at a gallop to Guillemont, the impetuous *Chasses Marais* in pursuit, though the batteries were protected and finally saved by armored cars. But the respite gained was vital. It enabled the French to push straight across the main road to Amiens and in-

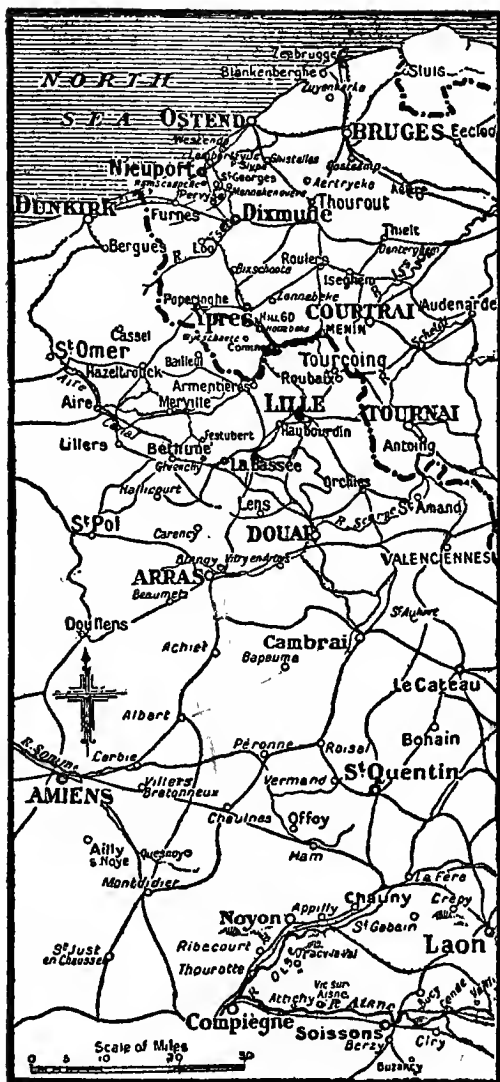
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trench, and they had barred the most important approach to the city and the railroad. Other mounted regiments fought and drove back medium and heavy German cavalry from the flank, and cleared the Arras road.

Checked on the banks of the Somme midway between Peronne and Bray, and faced now by a solid front east of Albert, which stood persistent massed attacks, the Germans held a complete semicircle on the southern and western edge of the Thiepval plateau, maintaining a wide salient dominating the French positions. From these hills they destroyed Albert. But all efforts to debouch from the southern slopes to the Somme valley failed, and advances from the western ridges were met and stopped by De Castelnau's left now resting firmly along the Ancre. Amiens and the road to Arras were safe, and the Ancre line held through trying weeks, when, by mining and sapping, entire sections were blown up and the enemy trenches came ominously close. But all this was siege warfare, which had extended north forty miles from the Aisne across the Somme, and thirty miles north of the river, now nearly to Arras.

Directly De Castelnau's flanking offensive reverted to trench warfare, Joffre again reached north to repeat this strategy east of Arras. On September 30, based on this ancient capital of Artois, a new army was gathered under General Maud'huy. Com-





MAP NO. 2.

AREAS ACROSS WHICH THE GERMAN ARMIES WERE CHECKED AND HALTED BY THE ALLIES IN SUCCESSIVE BATTLES WHICH CURVED THE INTRENCHED FRONT FROM THE AISNE NORTH TO THE BELGIAN COAST.

posed chiefly of a mixed force of Territorials, this army was deployed on De Castelnau's left, extending the front to Lens, while the cavalry, supported by strong columns, moved out from Arras along the Scarpe across the plain of Douai. These forces advanced well round the German flank and menaced communications at Valenciennes. But huge enemy forces had reached Cambrai to flank De Castelnau, and Maud'huy's offensive was checked and rolled back—a duplicate of the previous maneuvers. The French retired to the line Hebuterne-Arras-Lens while heavy columns hammered their center, to capture Arras. By October 5, Maud'huy was reorganizing his forces just east of the city.

We have all read frequently of the "telescopic German right" which had been "steadily extended northward." This description can be applied to the forces of the Allies only. They had built up their line sector by sector. There was no "telescopic" extension of the German front above Noyon. It was a new invasion by mass.

Speed was essential for a definite German triumph. Directly their armies were deadlocked on the Aisne, they had regrouped their forces for a great strategic stroke. On the frontier von Falkenhayn took command of covering corps on the defensive line, von Stranz broadened his front before Metz, and the Crown Prince extended his left round Verdun. This released the Sixth and Seventh

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Armies. Across Champagne von Einem extended the reorganized Third Army. Two corps commanders were promoted, von Emmich, of Liége fame, and von Zwehl, questionable hero of Maubeuge and the Aisne gap. These commands, built up with forces from Alsace, Reservists, divisions of second line Landwehr and Ersatz formations, took over the intrenched line between von Kluck and the Argonne, and released the Second and Fourth Armies. Thus four armies augmented by new divisions were free late in September to sweep back in a united effort to capture the rest of Belgium and all North France.

Plan 1 of the General Staff, the capture of Paris and the rout of the French Army, had failed decisively. In a modified form Plan 2 was the natural sequence. This embraced the capture of Belgium, and all North France, above a line from Metz west to the sea, by seizing and intrenching the Rheims-Laon barrier along the Aisne and westward to Havre and the Seine mouth. The Marne retreat had now placed their armies on the eastern half of the selected line of positions which Nature had implanted along the greater part of this front, as an incentive for No. 2 of Germany's defined plans of campaign, which would seize Belgium and rob France of her chief mineral and industrial regions and her most important Channel ports.

If the German leaders at first had been less impetuous in their assurance of victory, Plan 2 might

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have been consummated fully. When von Kluck captured Amiens, with the Allies in retreat, his reserve corps and cavalry could have swept southwest, isolated Amade's forces and captured Rouen and Le Havre, avoiding the risk and losses of the dash south for Paris. The other armies would have experienced little difficulty in extending and intrenching along the Aisne on a wider front to the west, thus embracing an extension to the sea of the same line to which they were soon driven with sanguinary loss. All the ports accessible from England would then have been cut off, an exposed flank avoided, and all North France occupied. The middle of October was to see the Germans holding firmly at a right angle to it, a longer and more difficult line north to Belgium than the one Plan 2 had selected from Laon west to the coast, and it was well east of the main railroad which linked Paris with ports 21 miles from England, while Dieppe and Le Havre, with its vast wharves and railroads, were open for Southampton to pour in daily fleets with men and stores.

In September the German horde had been deadlocked on the intrenched Aisne line, like a tidal wave arrested by too strong a dam. The freed armies were to react, as the flood would recede from the barrier and flow round its confines. Von Heeringen and the Seventh Army, disengaged first, had gone over to operate between the Oise and Somme, above von Kluck's right. Von Buelow with the Sec-

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ond Army, was striking due west, north of the Somme, aiming at Amiens, with his left swinging round toward Arras. He was checked as shown. The Sixth Army (Bavarian under Prince Rupprecht), was advancing further north, preceded by eight divisions of cavalry, and deploying above von Buelow between Arras and Belgium, aiming at Lille and the vast and practically undefended industrial regions of Nord and Pas de Calais. Above this army, on its right, the Fourth (Wurttemberg) was moving back to Belgium to coöperate with the Ninth Army under von Beseler, investing the Belgian Army in Antwerp. The siege guns were already reducing the fortress. The remnants of the Belgian Army were to be enveloped and driven to the sea or Holland.

In theory, even when von Buelow was checked, German success was assured. With eighteen army corps and four corps of cavalry operating above Noyon, and upper North France guarded only by detachments of Territorials, the rôle appeared an easy one. With Belgium finished, the Fourth Army, its right on the coast, could clean up the weakly defended Channel ports, and in coöperation with the Bavarians in Artois and Pas de Calais, imposing masses could literally swamp the Allied flank when shaken by frontal attacks, and roll it south.

Recall the political trend of German strategy in the war. Its aim has been the extension of mili-

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tary lines as an actual extension of the German frontier. From the first the army may be said to have lifted the frontier posts and moved them as far outward across Belgium and France as they could force their way, making the ground behind solidly German. The nominal western frontier of Germany started at Antwerp and extended along a picketed line, through Brussels to France at Valenciennes and thence to the Aisne. Its southern border was marked firmly along the intrenched front. The next effort was to push the western frontier outward from the Noyon curve and, by sheer weight at the north, bend it forward until it extended straight across France to the western coast. Von Moltke had aimed for Paris and failed. His successor, von Falkenhayn, was reaching for Belgium and all North France: Plan 2.

The Germans were operating on a concentric front from which troops could be moved rapidly by direct routes to any desired point. Belgian and French railroads had hastily been broken to delay the first invasion. But the skilled railroad corps had been long prepared for eventualities. Duplicate parts for destroyed bridges, surveys and material for reconstruction, had long been ready. By October 1 the network of Belgian and French railways was restored and practicable. Even dynamited tunnels had been excavated from above by steam shovels, and opened into cuttings.

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The Allies had to move men and stores by a circuitous route, passing entirely along the new western front which the Germans were approaching, vulnerable at many points for attack in force, and open everywhere for raiders. But strategy must not only be based on knowledge of what an opponent is doing, but on a correct estimate of the action conditions will force upon him. Even the rapid report by aëroplane could not cover the unforeseen things which wrecked the ponderous German plan. Her mechanical definition of Force overlooked many elements of power which must come under the same heading. And Joffre seldom did the "correct" military thing as expected by minds trained in the rigid Moltke school.

First, Germany did not seriously consider the French Territorials, or the Territorial Reserves of the last line, who had neither uniforms, stores, nor equipment, but possessed rifles and the spirit to dig and fight for France. Fathers and grandfathers, they died in a thousand minor actions, holding towns and villages and bridges, guarding the roads and railroads, eating and sleeping when fate decreed and placing no strain on organized resources.

This left the active Territorials free for the fighting line. These had relieved De Castlenau's left and enabled him to push up through Amiens overnight when the cavalry corps on the Somme, supported only by four Territorial divisions, were being over-

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whelmed. This developed the battle before Albert which saved the main railroad north.

Unexpectedly Joffre had faced the risk, and, depleting the Territorial garrisons in the north, had massed them before Arras under Maud'huy, an intransigent Lorrainer born at Metz. These forces made a solid line that bent but could not be broken. This left the two northern departments practically unprotected, but it kept open roads and rail vital for both British and French armies when they rushed up from the Aisne. The scattered garrisons that were to be swamped proved invincible when gathered as an unexpected army, and their final reserves proved heroes in their absence.

Detachments of Uhlans and motorcycleists, who had moved round Arras to destroy bridges on road and rail between Amiens and Bethune, were routed at Doullens and St. Pol by Belgian armored cars manned by British Naval airmen under Commander Sampson. They had volunteered to patrol unguarded roads, came by fortunate chance on the enemy, and broke another cog in the German machine.

A brigade of Marine Fusiliers, Breton recruits without sea service, marched recklessly from Dunkirk to Belgium without supports. The British Seventh Division sent from England too late to help Antwerp, also landed at Ostend, a blunder of Winston Churchill's which was to have a glorious result.



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These unexpected forces kept open roads by which the Belgian army was able to escape from Antwerp and envelopment, and because of these fortunate accidents could join the Allies in fighting a delaying action, which broke the plans of the Wurttemberg army and saved the Channel ports. By a series of fortuitous circumstances, the ambitious German strategy was to fail at every point.

*Qui vive? Ou allez vous?* The challenge was French when the post should have been British, and my companion on a trip toward Soissons had not troubled to get the "word" for the day and forgot also if the last countersign had been "Joan of Arc" or "Bouches du Rhone." He cursed the spies who turned signposts to deflect dispatch riders and convoys toward the German lines with a maw of guns ready for the unwary. So we made a detour to get our bearings and gained the main road, singularly free from British transports and ambulances on an important line of communication. October had switched summer to winter with unprecedented rapidity, but the soldiers who stood shivering in the bitter rain wore the red and blue of France.

We soon found parts of General French's army moving from the front. Could it be a retreat? No, because Messrs. Thomas Atkins were cheerful, singing "Tipperary," and singularly clean and soldierly; shaven, refitted, and well-groomed—a strik-

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ing contrast to anything that we had seen in the war.

We soon learned that part of the French Army, and the British Army, were starting to withdraw from the Aisne to entrain for the north of France. Unit after unit was leaving the trenches after dark, and the new levies of France were taking their place. If French batteries were not available, spare wheels were taken from the artillery wagons or from farmers' carts, and dummy guns replaced the British batteries, leaving nothing new for the watchful *aéroplanes* to report. The new forces were manning the trenches secretly, and included the Second Regiment of the Foreign Legion with its effective American contingent. In the ranks were two members of the Seventh New York, sons of Captain Towle, and Alan Seeger of Harvard.

The British and strong French forces of the first line were packing up their multifarious equipment, moving down from the heights and over the river. Strategic initiative was impossible on the intrenched fronts. The Allies hoped to regain it by a rapid concentration above Arras which might decisively turn the German right, or, by masking it, sweep on into South Belgium to break communications and carry the war well behind the enemy's concentric front, and automatically relieve Antwerp, which was hard pressed. Its fall and the release of the German investing army would complicate the situation. If it held, much of Western Belgium might be saved.

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Hurrying back north in a Red Cross car, we found the situation strangely complicated. There was a thunder of guns beyond the Arras road, and crowds of frightened refugees flocking west; invalids huddled in perambulators, children with cats and canaries, told the story. We had gone up ready for the hour that the Aisne forces reached Artois and pushed home Maud'huy's triumph. But the French had now been driven west from Douai, and enormous columns were already at the gates of Arras, with strong forces pushing the French left through Lens and breaking its link with the small Lille garrison.

Maud'huy's right below Arras was pushed back west of the first Amiens road, losing the junction of the railway that joins the city with Amiens and Bapaume at Achiet. But his link with De Castelnau was not pierced, and the front rested firmly before Monchy and Hebutern, saving the trunk road and important railway through Doullens. And his center stood firmly round Arras, clinging to the ruins of Blangy and its eastern suburb and circling round the ancient city, so intimately connected with French history, its sorrows and its glories.

On October 6 a heavy bombardment raged over the lines and ruthlessly battered the city to pieces, murdering its citizens, destroying its famous buildings, and wrecking concrete memorials to historic men and scenes. The first targets for *Kultur* were

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the cathedral and the ancient Hôtel de Ville with its magnificent belfry which has inspired architects and artists of all countries for centuries. Twice the enemy poured over the obsolete ramparts, and the streets ran with blood before they were expelled.

When the General Staff found that the Aisne Army was passing north, the Guard Corps under the Kaiser's eye stormed the line *en masse* nine times in a desperate effort to break through to capture the city and gain the main roads that would enable their legions to swarm over the plains of Artois and dam the movement north. But Maud'huy's heroes stood firm, fulfilling at terrible cost Joffre's order, "Let the last man die before Arras falls!"

Above Arras, with their guns on advantageous ridges, the Germans fought their way over the hills across the roads to Lille and Bethune. But the French line held them there firmly, and they were unable to debouch to the open ground westward for the flanking movements on which success now depended, and where the main roads from Paris via Amiens branched for the deployment of Joffre's forces above Arras.

We skirted the front and through Bethune, eighteen miles north, as the battle was reaching its first fury in the repeated attacks which raged for twenty-five days. But soon the roads were again filled with bewildered refugees hurrying from every point of the compass. Women, children and very

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old men from the Bethune district were running up the roads to Estaires and Aire, and people from Merville were hurrying down to Bethune. When they mingled and turned west, frightened villagers met them with news that Hussars and motorcyclists were lurking along the road to Hazebrouck, and patrols were swarming in the forest of Nieppe. Uh-lans and machine guns were also reported toward St. Omer. Then the truth dawned on us. The Arras battle was not the high-water mark of aggression. Pas de Calais and the Nord were invaded, and the Territorial forces of these departments had been moved to Lille and Maud'huy's left wing.

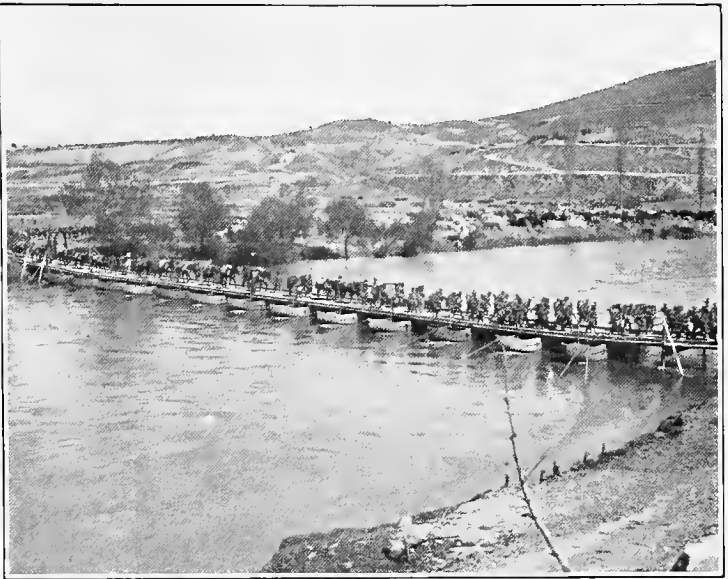
Broad roads led to the important railroads on which the armies must come north; inviting routes were open above Lille direct to the Channel ports and the direct communications with England. On the coast were the cliffs and dunes by Grinez, on which the German flag could float twenty-one miles from British shores, with positions for siege guns to dominate the Straits of Dover, to cover the planned invasion of England, and at extreme range bombard Folkestone and the Dover naval base. The Allied dam had not been built up far enough. Refugees from districts north of Lille had seen enormous masses of German cavalry and horse artillery, and there were no forces to cope with them.

During the first week of October the depleted local garrison of Lille had fought gallantly. At first they

had been driven out. Reënforced, they had recaptured the city; reënforced, the Germans later retook it; reënforced, the French got back; reënforced, the invaders finally went in to stay on the 12th. The citadel, a masterpiece of Vauban, played no part in the defense; the capital of French Flanders, seventh city of the Republic and queen of French industries, was practically an open town, captured first by a huge sweep of cavalry at a time when there were no troops available to make adequate defense. And with only scattered handfuls of reserves guarding railroads, crossroads, bridges and towns, the northern departments were open to the enemy.

Recall the exploits of Morgan, Stuart, Mosby, Grierson, Wilson, or Stoneman. For a leader of their class in early October the conditions for a stupendous and effective raid were ideal. Six divisions of cavalry, with motorcyclists, light artillery, machine guns, and an abundance of armored automobiles, were available, and in any army but the German, the officers, on the spot, would have gathered their forces and dashed off while the opportunity was theirs. But with *Planmaessig*<sup>1</sup> as their watchword, the German forces do not move that way. Everything in the machine must be coördinate and subordinate to the general plan. Its strategy aimed at finality, and subordinate initiative was forbidden. The theory of envelopment must be worked out on

<sup>1</sup> According to plan.



GERMAN COLUMN CROSSING A PONTOON BRIDGE



GERMAN ARMY FIELD BAKERY





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schedule. The ponderous columns reaching Belgium had to move up for deployment; Antwerp must fall, and advance guards must not seek premature engagements while the front was developing for the decisive attack with a maximum and irresistible force.

This theory had sent the army to the gates of Paris, and only failed by an over-confident flank. How could similar masses fail in a second invasion, with a solid front, wheeling and changing direction—the right protected by the sea, and the Allied armies far south and depleted by forces necessary to maintain the intrenched front? But the theory was to collapse at its inception when challenged by the rapid coördinate initiative of independent forces which did not lose an hour to insure their safety, or wait for plans to develop when speed alone could save the day. The German staff would have taken either ten weeks or ten years to win the Civil War. Instead of concentration and vigorous action, the cavalry were now spread fan-shaped over a great terrain, terrorizing the countryside, to pave the way for the general advance which was frustrated in most of its objects by the arrival of the armies from the Aisne over tracks and bridges that proper patrols could easily have destroyed. “*Die Reiterei allzeit voran*” had lost its trenchancy.

Operating above Lens, round Bethune, south of Hazebrouck and near Cassel through Bailleul, oc-

cupying Warneton and Armentières, the mounted troops were loafing or riding into Belgium toward Menin and Ypres. Everywhere they were faced only by isolated detachments of Territorial reserves, as they waited for their infantry to move up. Yet off the main roads we looked down on many peaceful valleys dotted with farms, gardens still enameled with flowers, pleasant villages framed by trees, on the fertile borders of France's "black country" of solid miles of factory and foundry. The Angelus rang from distant belfries, children peered through embowered gates. Peace and beauty rested on the countryside, for the war had seemed very far away, and rumor had traveled slowly. The people hardly heeded the distant grumble which we knew was not thunder and which toward evening grew louder. At several points where we watched clouds of dust on a sky line broken by the tall smokeless chimneys of Lille and Roubaix, French troops half dead with thirst and fatigue were plodding over the slopes, and the swath of destruction which marks German warfare was starting to spread like prairie fire, obliterating church, château and cottage impartially.

We found Hazebrouck almost normal, considering its danger. We ascended a hill near Cassel where the next station was burned. A wide view could be obtained, and farms were alight in several directions. Near Caestre we could hear the rattle of rifles north, east and south, where isolated Terri-

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torial units were fighting. We passed many French Territorial detachments watching for boches, who kept off the main roads in the day. Later we met a cart with the bodies of four of these wonderful patriots. Two had been killed outright, and two who had been wounded had their skulls crushed in, for a *coup de grâce*. One, in full uniform, was a courtly gentleman of the old school, with a white imperial. Two were apparently small storekeepers, and the fourth a farmer. What a stupendous insolence for these citizen-soldiers to defend their country, this "rabble" to face a superior force of German soldiers without flinching! The miscreants had forfeited the right to live—hence the crushed skulls of the wounded two. Jolt on, French patriots, back to your villages where your grandchildren will weep! An odd four in countless thousands, but four immortals who taught us what the watchwords "*Honneur, Patrie, Gloire*" meant, for on these older men, poorly equipped, rested the task of holding up an avalanche until help arrived.

In times of peace we should smile at the last lines of the French army as a fighting force. Of the twenty-eight classes of men called to the colors by the three-year law, each regiment has its actives, its 3,000 reservists, and 3,000 territorials, the "regiments de marche," with 5,000 territorial reserves, older men, of the other classes, to draw on. These men of middle age, family men, shopkeepers, cob-

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blers, the genial, comfortable *bourgeoisie*, had been gathered by mobilization for local work. And on these scattered units now fell the task of checking operations when hordes of cavalry started across Nord and Pas de Calais, giving no quarter. My pen can do feeble justice to these fathers and grandfathers of France who after weeks of arduous and lonely vigil suddenly found the enemy sweeping across their territory. Nothing could make a more direct appeal to the American heart than these patriots, citizens, slaughtered in thousands when defending their native soil. Yet what space has been devoted to their glorious defense in the pages of praise for the German military machine, written by the pens of its then neutral guests, on a tour of inspection, in this very district?

Early October was bitter cold, even on the Aisne, and farther north no one remembered such a penetrating rawness which chilled to the marrow, and added enormously to the hardships of the unsheltered troops and refugees. It was the aftermath of excessive precipitation from the continual artillery fire, at a period when cyclonic conditions were normal. The isolated detachments had built rude shacks of straw. They were too scattered for regular commissariat, but women and children tramped miles daily with food. Then patrols on motorcycles, and detachments of cavalry stalked them and shot them down, and hundreds of miniature battles raged

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where these devoted Frenchmen held villages successfully and fought at bridges and crossroads. And it was amazing to see how aimless the German efforts were, unless the shooting down piecemeal of middle-aged shopkeepers, on isolated guard duty, is a military achievement. The raiders would fight for and perhaps capture and burn a wayside station or farm. We could see fires in most contradictory places, and the rattle of rifles marked skirmishes at every point of the compass.

No one seemed to know what was happening. To the large towns women and children fled, many giving pitiful evidence of shameful treatment at lonely houses. A German cyclist detachment held up and boarded a train from St. Omer to Hazebrouck, shooting from the windows the unsuspecting *Territoriaux* on guard along the railroad. They shot up Hazebrouck station, and killed the police, railroad porters, and a young girl, who bravely cried a warning. The raid accomplished nothing and left the railroad intact.

At night we put up in a small town beyond Hazebrouck. After the soporific of the nightly roar of artillery down the lines, tense silence now made sleep for us difficult, and a distant rifle shot roused us. We soon heard shrieks, shouts and distant firing, then shots in the street below. There elderly reservists, night shirts tucked in duck trousers, were crouching in doorways and firing up at the Square.

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We hurried to the street, and heard that Uhlans had "captured" the town. But the sturdy citizen soldiers, coolly firing up three streets centering on the Place d'Armes, had localized the "invasion."

When the noise aroused the people who lived in the square, the Germans at once shot at all lighted windows, wounding one girl severely, others having narrow escapes as they dressed. Suddenly a German motorcyclist turned the corner so sharply that he nearly swept me off the narrow walk, shouting warnings as he fled. With a clatter of hoofs on the wet cobbles, a troop of French Reserve Dragoons, warned by telephone, galloped up the street, the Uhlans mounting and flying before them. Some of us raced up the road after the pursuers. Carbine shots whistled overhead as the Germans fired back at random to check pursuit, but the French—reservists, remember—rode like demons up the Meteren Road. The night was bitterly raw; the horsemen soon out-distanced us. A house was blazing on the horizon; a splutter of shots alone broke the silence, until a riderless horse galloped down the road and charged me when I tried to stop it. Another fire started in the distance, with faint but regular volleys, again shots nearer, and a woman's agonizing scream. Then a confused scuffling of hoofs, shouts, shots and curses down the road. Two French troopers rode back, one wounded and held in his saddle by his comrade. "Cornered some in the farm yard," was

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his laconic reply. We finally found the farm, but all was dark and silent, and we went back to bed. But daylight revealed two dead troopers and a writhing horse there. Multiply these incidents by hundreds and you have the trivial story of the achievement of one of the greatest independent cavalry commands in history. Evidently the Germans were not expecting the prompt Franco-British rush north.

Even the German communicating patrols and connecting posts were ineffectively arranged, and far too obvious, through their desire to shoot down small detachments. They threw the countryside into a turmoil, which gave the French troopers precise information when they came up. French cavalry screens were far more silent and cleverly invisible. Many horses and riders were draped in a bower of evergreen which made the brilliant uniforms more neutral than the clever blue-gray of the Teutons.

I should prefer to avoid writing of atrocities, or, by magnifying a sense of proportion, ascribe the acts to brutal individuals. But the evidence was so positive in the new war zone that a benevolent Philadelphia minister, caught by chance in the district, and who had both seen and investigated, told me that what the Allies needed were tanks of boiling oil for the prisoners. Certainly mounted patrols caught on the Meteren-Bailleul road should have been hanged. So much reflected the spirit of the German poet who attempted an epic in the soldiers' paper

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printed in Lille, including this Christian admonition :

Oh ! Germany now hate ! Clad in Bronze take no prisoners,  
To each enemy a bayonet thrust through the heart,  
Silence all, and make a desert of the surrounding country.

The beloved Abbé Bogaert, Curé of Pradelles, a village just east of Hazebrouck, on the upper road to Bailleul, was ordered by a group of impatient officers to take them to the tower of the church for observation. He explained that the sacristan had the key and had fled. "Liar," thundered one bully. "Break the door down, then shoot this hound." And the unfortunate priest was murdered in cold blood. This fact was reported to Rome as from Pradelles, the volcanic town in the Velay, and thus brushed aside as a canard. The incident was typical of hundreds.

An American, an agent for electrical supplies, left his wife and three young daughters for the summer in a country house near Lille while he returned home on business. Caught suddenly in the swirl of the war, these unprotected Americans fell victims to a certain group of under-officers, and endured appalling experiences at their hands. When they were able to appeal for protection to a higher officer they were treated with great respect and kindness, and some weeks later were able to return home via Germany. This true story appears incredible and the details may never be published, as the victims' lips are naturally sealed, though some friends have urged



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the frantic father to report the facts to Washington as a public duty. The first thing that greeted these weeping people on landing in New York was the poster of a current attraction—advertising a sextette of vapid girls and youths who shook silken ankles over the footlights to the strains of “I did not raise my boy to be a soldier.”

War in itself does not brutalize. Many of us who have been under fire many times in various climes have never returned from a campaign without experiencing a severe shock at the amenities of civilization, the selfish commercial scramble, the lack of human sympathy, the distorted standards of brotherhood, in sharp contrast to the spirit engendered by war conditions where every man is a comrade, every luxury must be shared in common, and many unwritten codes are enforced by the spiritual stimuli of danger and death. We can recall men vividly to-day who were Tenderloin rounders until they fought in Cuba or South Africa and were utterly changed by the realities of the campaign. To-day they are popular and public-spirited citizens. The horrors of war will bring reward to the survivors, and regenerate many effeminate youths who have sneered at the National Guard and wasted their energy at tango teas.

In your morning paper you read that a new battle front had formed, and experts added more parallel lines across the war map. Geographically and in

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general the war news of the American press has been wonderfully correct and worthy of praise. But as you looked at the black lines did you have any realization of what they meant? Try to visualize the scene.

Early October in the peaceful French lowlands! The busy industrial districts of Lille, where women were splendidly doing the bulk of the work while the men fought, and the flood of invasion had flowed toward Paris. Then shots, shouts, a clatter of hoofs, as cavalry patrols scampered through the villages—the first hints that the tidal wave of war was surging in their direction.

On the farms the men were gone. The women and children would hear hoarse commands in an alien tongue, as cavalry or a cyclist detachment of the dreaded enemy rode up. Protection there was none and sometimes none was needed. Food and shelter must be given, and secrecy. The advanced parties would frequently sleep all day, with sentries guarding the family in the attic. If grandfather could not curb his tongue, or looked surly, there was generally trouble, ending in a shooting or hanging, and if the cellar stored wine, and the women were comely, unpleasantness, trivial at first, would rapidly develop into tragedy at nightfall, unless some one possessed extreme tact. Tears at the outset often averted insult, where spirited resentment at a kiss or rough horseplay sometimes stimulated appalling outrage.

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Bavarians bivouacked on one farm two days, but slept in a cow shed so as not to upset a sick woman. They cleared up the place, chopped wood and overpaid for all they had. Very near, two girls were forced to dance naked, until an officer arrived and cut short the orgy with a horsewhip. At Bailleul a few women were shockingly treated, while refugees that we talked to on the Merville road had been given bread and cheese by Uhlans who must have needed it themselves. All the peasants overtaken on the road were robbed of their money. The Westphalian Hussars, Seventh Corps, were special ruffians. In the Nieppe woods, near French troops, a patrol hanged a farmer because he told them to go to the devil when they roused him from his bed at midnight for military information. Shivering in her nightdress, the screaming wife lit the scene with her candle, and at daylight she was still sobbing in the cold by the body she had pulled down too late.

So on every road, with thoroughness and some frightfulness, the antennæ of the invaders were resting before feeling their way to the coast, a waste of precious time before the real advance followed. And back of Lille and Courtrai, thousands of troops of all branches were massing and losing time to perfect every detail before following the forces spread over a front marked by Lens, Bethune, Merville and Cassel into Belgium, and only two days' march from

the coast. A few regiments could have seized and held strategic points soon essential for German success.

In a short time guns crowded the hills, and as soon as the avalanche started, they pounded every town or village within range, regardless of noncombatants, and often when there were no French troops near. But waiting for Antwerp to fall, to release forces in Belgium, masses of cavalry had been wasting time, perhaps sparing the railroads for later use, while scores of French troop trains were loading from the Aisne to rush the Allies north under their very noses, to fill the gap of fifty-one miles from Maud'huy's left to the Belgian coast.

The first troop trains started up with French troops bound for Belgium, but they were diverted to reënforce the Arras army. The men came up by night, and at daylight the emptied trains went back with stores and retrieved freight on the flat cars as masks. Aëroplanes which caught a distant view reported numerous trains going south, probably taking down some of Kitchener's forces. When the Allies realized how the German tidal wave was flowing back to North France, the race was against time, and trains came north every twelve minutes, the route covered by French fliers who kept inquisitive machines away, though from the air the procession of empty trains maintaining the same headway south might have proved puzzling.

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There was delay and congestion between Etaples and Boulogne, due to the switching and drilling of some trains at Hesdigneul from the main Calais line. But the work of transferring the French and British armies was wonderfully done by the government control of the railroads, which automatically became military without hitch or friction, by placing a guard at every station, and giving the railroad staff military hats. French railroad efficiency is proverbial; the trains are also the fastest in the world. Recalling confusion in Tampa in 1898, the simplicity of the French system deserves notice in the United States, for a stroke of the pen and a change of uniform only were necessary.

Antwerp fell with astonishing suddenness October 10, after a terrific bombardment of twelve days. Von Beseler's siege artillery outranged the defending guns, and pulverized the forts, most of which had been evacuated. The Belgian army crossed the Scheldt behind the civil population, and made a detour, getting round the end of the German lines before the shattered city surrendered, to avoid destruction. The capitulation was a severe blow to the Allies.

Antwerp's fall was the signal for the Wurttemberg army to start across Belgium, only to find that the British Seventh Division and cavalry, too late to reach the fortress from Ostend, were marching across its path. They were soon joined by the

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French marines, and von Beseler's forces, moving along the coast, had been able to shell only the rear of the escaping Belgians. The German forces on the Lys, headed by cavalry, swung forward to head off King Albert's army but met a decided check from the unexpected British cavalry while the Belgians marched toward France intact. Finally the small forces of the three Allies turned at bay on a pitifully thin line to check the sweep across Belgium until help arrived.

The fall of Antwerp was the tocsin also for the Bavarians to start forward across Pas de Calais. But the forces from the Aisne were now detraining, and the French cavalry which had guarded Maud'huy's flank was freed to move north in conjunction with the British mounted divisions.

Too late German demolition detachments scurried down by night, to destroy railroads, and the cavalry pushed forward to seize bridges and important points. An improvised Corps de Mitrailleurs, Belgian and British, scoured the roads with armored cars. The usually brilliant spies also failed everywhere except in one derailment on the main line below Calais, which caught a troop train returning loaded with homeless women and children, 400 of whom were killed as the cars plunged from the steep embankment. With horse artillery, machine guns, bicycle detachments, Jaeger companies and supply trains, the now futile cavalry divisions moved down

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several roads west of Lille, followed by the advance guard of the Bavarian columns.

“Formations be d——! Get up the road as far as you can and fight!” was one British order, and it epitomized the new campaign of the Allies. Unlike the Germans, they wasted no time on ornate plans or submissive strategy and tactics. The cavalry and some troops in motor vans and busses came up from the Aisne by road, and wiped up Uhlans at Bethune on October 11. Some of the British batteries had not fully refitted after earlier battles. There were teams with only a lead driver, wheel and center horses being driven by the limber gunners with rope reins. Batteries were commanded by subalterns; sections by sergeants. But as each unit, horse, foot or guns arrived, either in the Bethune district or on the St. Omer-Hazebrouck railroad, it was started off up some designated road to the front.

A Bavarian cavalry column hurried down the road from Haubourdin and extended between Salome and Estaires, overwhelming and annihilating some French squadrons. But as they touched the border of Pas de Calais a fleet of airships came up, and working in relays, rained bombs and *les flèches* on them, the tiny arrows breaking up formations in the most novel fight of the war, which ended when British and French troopers charged on each flank, and the Germans withdrew. Two regiments of French Cuirassiers then gained their rear by crossing the

Lys in flood during the night, a trooper swimming across with guide ropes under the nose of the sentries. This caused the only brilliant move of the German cavalry to fail utterly. They retreated, covered by rear guards, and apparently were without orders to fight.

Anglo-French cavalry saved Bethune by a narrow margin with its star of important roads. The Germans, however, still held the pyramid slag heaps of Lens firmly, and from Douai poured men and guns up the Estaires road. Far from supports, instead of retiring as good troopers should, the Allied cavalymen borrowed spades from the farms, dug in, and held as infantry east of the town, until Smith-Dorrien arrived and augmented the line with the British Second Corps, and built it up after a score of individual battles had been fought. The right of the Second Corps gained some ground before Bethune and, extending toward Vermelles, joined hands with the left of the Tenth French Army on the Arras-Lens front. Bethune was a serious loss to the Germans, who had sacrificed thousands of men to gain a footing along hills on the main road from Arras at Lorette and Souchez, but lost the cities at each end. Bethune gave the British a valuable advanced base, with the vats of beet sugar refineries as baths for the clothes and person of the cleanly Thomas Atkins.

The Germans, however, took up a position at La



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Bassée, along the main road running north from Lens to Estaires, where brick fields and ridges gave them a strong line of defenses for scores of machine guns and heavy artillery. For a few days the 4.3 field howitzers shelled Bethune ineffectively, but the batteries withdrew as the British consolidated their lines three miles east of the city, and got their few field guns into action from cleverly masked positions near the front.

Its right checked at La Bassée, the left of the British Second Corps, north of Bethune, fought its way forward, driving the Germans back nine miles to the Aubers ridge and along the boundary of Pas de Calais, the spirited advance only being checked by a mass of artillery rushed out from Lille, to which the British could make no adequate reply. In this brilliant fighting the British lost General Hamilton and half of the strength of the units engaged, but they had gained a big section of the main road north, above La Bassée, though weeks of desperate fighting subsequently modified their front.

While Smith-Dorrien was creating his lines, the French and British cavalry had continued their sweep northeast to clear the front toward Belgium. The French cavalry under Conneau had first cleared the Nieppe forest, having special trouble with cyclists backed by machine guns, who pushed through Aire and operated with special dash around Hazebrouck until rounded up. Conneau then coöperated

with the British, while their Third Corps was detraining at St. Omer. He relieved and then supported Gough's cavalry brigade, which was flanking and routing the huge cavalry forces which had loafed in the Bailleul district for eight days, looting, and maltreating women while they waited for the plan to develop. The Sixth Division, Bavarian Cavalry, proved more adept at making girls dance naked than at destroying bridges or erecting defenses.

By October 15 the French and British cavalry were holding all the towns, villages, and bridges on the Lys to Armentières, twelve miles above Lille. Here they recaptured the railroad in a spectacular raid, blew up flimsy barricades and galloped into that important city. Two British squadrons with machine guns went right on to Warneton, and rode into the heart of the town, which was hastily evacuated. Houses were loopholed, and they prepared for defense in the square, sending back for help. When the insignificance of the force was appreciated, a German regiment opened an attack from adjacent streets. The handful of heroes held out until their machine guns were useless, and as reënforcements were not reported, they crept to their horses after dark and galloped out. Warneton was the center of the hop industry, and the fields were carefully protected for subsequent German use.

But Armentières, captured under the noses of a Saxon Corps, gave the Allies important roads to Bel-

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gium and a railroad junction; and units of the Third Corps hurried up, after the resourceful cavalry had intrenched on a line well east of the town. The British repelled desperate attempts to recapture Armentières, and its loss sent several high German officers to retirement.

Heavy artillery soon rendered the railroad useless, but in further retaliation the city itself was bombarded without notice, though it was unfortified and used only for the wounded. The Chamber of Commerce met and sent an appeal to Washington, pointing out that only noncombatants were suffering. The faith we found in the justice of the United States was touching, and as we saw a hundred pretty towns and villages, well behind the firing line, ruthlessly bombarded, and trembled with rage as rows of tiny coffins passed us, and as we watched mangled heaps that had been a girl of twenty and a pretty tot of three, we wondered if neutrality should silence official protest?

After a series of semi-independent battles, the two British Corps, by October 17, had masked the Lille front with an irregular and thin but effective line between Vermelles to the Belgian frontier—north of which hardly pressed mixed forces now stretched precariously across Belgium—to the sea. There was not a single unit in actual reserve along the entire line. This was a radical modification of the original Allied plan of seizing Bethune and pivoting

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the line there across the German right above Arras. But the German armies were now firmly checked in their rush to the Channel ports, and strategically the victory was with the Allies.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FRONT IN FLANDERS

DURING the early stages of the arrival and deployment of the British army, it was an easy ride from Hazebrouck to Belgium where the field forces and garrison of Antwerp were being hotly pursued to the frontier. We dined one night with a relative of the War Minister, a clean-cut lieutenant carrying dispatches from London. He dashed off by motor-cycle after dark to reach Bruges, but the next morning, covered with mud, he rode into the square at Furnes, where we had gone before breakfast. He had encountered big German forces on two roads, escaping by a miracle. The Belgian army appeared to be cut off.

Owing to efficient censorship, the people in Flanders were not greatly worried. But we passed some heavy drays unostentatiously carrying the priceless art treasures of Belgium to safety. M. Dommartin, State Librarian, and Deputy de Grott deserve the thanks of the civilized world for saving part of the matchless art of Flanders from destruction. Alas, the mishap to one wagon left Jordaen's wonderful "Adoration" stranded at Dixmude, where it was de-

stroyed, with its cover of theatrical scenery tied over to protect it. We found the officials in Furnes keenly anxious to learn the fate of the plucky Belgian army risking annihilation in the interior, with disturbing reports of the enemy from every direction. The civil government was moving from Ostend to Havre; the leading newspapers were changing their offices to London.

From Dunkirk, Admiral Ronarch had taken his famous brigade of Marine Fusiliers to Belgium. These Breton lads, without naval experience, led by France's youngest Admiral, marched to the Bruges-Ghent road to help the Belgian army. We now heard of the mysterious British force also fighting in the interior. At Antwerp's eleventh hour Kitchener had rushed General Rawlinson with part of the Fourth Corps to Ostend to help. This force, the Seventh Infantry Division under Capper, and Byng's cavalry division, had landed just too late. Prudence dictated a return to the transports, but this meager force hurried over to meet the menace of Wurtemberg columns moving up the Alost and Ghent roads against the flank of the approaching Belgians. Then disquieting news came of German cavalry with artillery from Tournai, moving north of Lille through Menin, where they soon occupied strong positions on the hills and ridges south of Ypres. Thus the Belgians, and the French and British operating with them, had the enemy advanc-

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ing on three sides: von Beseler hurrying through Bruges from Antwerp, Wurttemberg columns marching down the Ghent roads, and Bavarian mobile forces pushing northwest across the lines of retreat, with the North Sea to complete the quadrangle.

Riding beyond Furnes, we strained our ears for the guns! Dame Rumor was busy, but truthful, for the Germans were already marching from Antwerp along the coast, though trams for refugees ran to the last moment, and the Allies held open a gap between Bruges and Ghent. Motor cars were tearing down from Antwerp, each with a thrilling story; and women and children babbling hysterically from their terrible experiences of the siege and flight. The population of a large slice of Belgium was in flight. The faster cars were followed by a steady procession of military and civilian vehicles of every description, hurrying madly to apparent safety across the French frontier. The cry of that vast multitude must have reached the Throne of God. It was borne on the air as the pitiful plaint of flocks of parched sheep being driven from drought, growing louder and clearer until the human tones of fright and despair gripped our throats. It was heartrending. Magnificent limousines; delivery vans; taxicabs, crowded with frantic women and children; and armored cars full of wounded, led the way. Cavalry and artillery followed, and every species of vehicle, loaded with civilian fugitives—

soldiers and citizens inextricably mixed. A squadron of lancers rode their magnificent but jaded horses proudly, and carried a standard riddled and charred from a bursting shell. Many of the soldiers were wounded; the civilian equipages carried hundreds of sick people. Field batteries later rumbled along, the guns scored and useless because obsolete shells without driving bands had been used, a further proof of Belgian "aggression" which sent most of their guns to the scrap heap. Military cars, riddled transport wagons, field telegraph and ambulances, were mixed with the vehicles of farm and city.

Along the mud troughs beside the *pavés* strode the people from nearer towns, all fleeing frantically before the advancing Germans. Surely something more tangible than idle rumor was impelling these thousands to mad flight. For three days without a break, processions poured into France along the different roads: infantry, civilians, and patient dogs drawing everything from machine guns to carts bearing cots with dying people who dared not face the German terror. The weary women and children tramped until they fell from exhaustion, slept in wet grass by the roadside, and fled on again, looking back furtively. Many years of campaigning and travel in wild places had failed to prepare me for such wholesale suffering of the simple, prosperous people martyred for keeping their word.

Many of the cars also were spattered by shrapnel



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slugs, and several civilians were wounded, because at one place a German field battery, noticing soldiers, wounded stragglers retreating with the last of the column, had fired several indiscriminate rounds. As the range was luckily short, the minimum of the time fuses was a fraction too long, so the shells had buried themselves in the beet fields before they exploded, or the loss of innocent lives must have been terrible. The Germans are full of sentiment but they are utterly lacking in sympathy. These people had opposed them—therefore no mercy. Their hatred of the Belgians was intense, their prejudice, infantile.

I recalled scenes of another war. When the Spaniards retreated from El Caney, every American gun was masked because a few women and children were fleeing to Santiago with the soldiers. And as I listened to stories of these Belgian people, of towns bombarded without notice, of houses burned, and hostages executed, I remembered that every non-combatant from Santiago was escorted into the American lines before a shell was fired at the city; and the people, including many families of Spanish soldiers, were fed by an overworked commissary, the troops giving up their scanty rations without a murmur. Also that thousands of unprotected women and girls, going from Santiago to Siboney, slept in the woods unmolested, on the American line of communication. If there were tents available, the men

gave them up; and not an insult or coarse word was uttered.

The Belgian army proved the ordeal it had faced by the number of wounded who marched in its ranks. The spirit of the men was unbroken. They were clean-cut, self-respecting soldiers—the first and remaining impression being the way they looked you straight in the eye. These were not impressed peasants, but skillful artisans—the material which has made Belgium industrially great—their natty uniforms helping to make their bearing a striking contrast to the stolid German prisoners marching sullenly with them to Furnes.

Not only Antwerp but conquered Belgium was again in flight; fear had been spread over Flanders Orient, and, in Flanders Occident, also, the people were starting to flee. Recalling incidents of which I positively knew in North France, the course could only be commended. In the face of it all the mind clouded and recoiled, to see how the secure comfort and essentials of the material civilization of which we boast can be blotted out in a flash. The tenets of “noblesse oblige” have no power to restrain the mailed fist of Prussia.

To disarrange a German plan is often as efficacious as a decisive victory, though if the plan matures it is generally irresistible. By brilliant initiative and rapid offensives when opportunity invited, the French and British forces that had failed to help

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Antwerp not only checked the huge forces that planned to wipe out the Belgian Army, but effectively coöperated with King Albert's troops, and spoiled the junction of the German Armies crossing Belgium with the forces north of Lille; and they stopped these tidal waves from inundating North France to the sea.

The British Seventh Division had neither base nor line of communication, and was threatened on three sides. With Ronarch's Marines, this command fell back stubbornly, after covering the Belgian retirement. Faced by superior forces, they moved from the Bruges-Ghent front by a forced march through the night of the 12th, some units covering forty-eight miles, as the column withdrew through Roulers and was completely cleared from contact with the pursuing army corps, on the 13th. Byng's cavalry rode hard in advance, and had already surprised and checked the Germans pushing up in rear of Ypres. The British troopers interrupted a shocking orgy in the Messines district—there was no time for the Uhlans to bury their female victims when the alarm sounded.

When Joffre had realized the danger on his exposed left flank above Arras and to the Channel ports, he placed General Foch in command of the entire operations north of Noyon. Foch was head of the Ecole de Guerre—he commanded the Twentieth Corps, and then the Ninth Army. His genius

was unquestioned. He was faced by three problems. He had to mask and check the enemy attacking in force from Albert to Arras; to organize to meet the Bavarian, spreading forward on the open Lille front; and during this pressure the huge flanking forces marching across Belgium to Pas de Calais must be held back at all costs. In the race that ensued everything favored the Germans, who could move their columns direct to any point on the spreading circumference of the new front. The pressure in France grew so rapidly that the forces which were first destined for Belgium were diverted. "Extermination if necessary, but hold every road until help arrives," was Joffre's message to Foch.

General d'Urbal, commander of Dunkirk, had now thrown his available forces over the frontier toward Roulers, to protect the immediate Belgian flank. Reserve cavalry, some Spahis and Territorials, who all worked splendidly, coöperated north of the British, who were clearing advanced guards of the enemy from the eastern approaches to Ypres. In a desperately thin line the three Allies now faced about to make a stand across Belgium, along the rail and road running to Lille from the western outskirts of Ostend, through Roulers and Menin. The Belgian army, facing a strong force on the northern section of the new line, was utterly exhausted by its experiences in Antwerp, and in the close pursuit many supplies had to be left. The German Third Corps,

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advancing along the coast from Antwerp, now captured Ostend on the flank, and the Twelfth Corps, having reënforced the cavalry, was preparing to push from the hills behind Ypres and the British to Furnes, against the Belgian rear. King Albert's army, therefore, retired through Dixmude, and its main body was in Furnes, prepared for further retirement across the frontier, when Joffre's message arrived.

The eagerness of the enemy to envelop the Belgians led to quick counter strokes. A column approaching Dixmude for a frontal attack found a rapidly constructed barricade before the town held by the French Marines, who repelled repeated assaults. Forces pushing in behind Ypres for the Belgian rear were met by an audacious attack by Byng's cavalry toward Mont des Chats, and the southern menace to Furnes was checked.

Quietly King Albert rode through Furnes and addressed his army. Food and ammunition his men should have. Rest was even more badly needed, but he only asked them to stand along the Yser for forty-eight hours, when reënforcements should arrive from the Aisne. You would not think that the Age of Chivalry was dead if you had seen the King and Queen of the Belgians with their army. Only such a king could have turned these exhausted men straight back to battle without a murmur. They had fought persistently for ten weeks. For many

days in Antwerp and during the retreat, food and rest had been impossible. I saw men fall on the wet cobbles and sleep like logs until their regiments marched. They walked in a trance, their eyes set and bloodshot. Some who stepped into the churches to pray fell asleep prostrated before the altar. But they were all soon trudging back up the road to check the eager enemy along the northern section of the new thin line being built across Belgium. Many units had straggled into France, and without rest they also turned back to the front next day. We had seen too much to be moved, but a dozen times we sprang up in the car and cheered.

To me the most interesting of the many incidents crowding those few puzzling, chaotic days was the reorganization of the famous Belgian machine-gun batteries. The regular dog teams were augmented by the Lilliputian country carts drawn by canine heroes that had dragged the lares and penates of their owners to safety; and now, requisitioned for the army, they were reloaded with supplies and ammunition. The intelligence of the Belgian draught dog is beyond belief. The military teams at first showed haughty resentment toward their civilian comrades. Later a tacit understanding arose. These amazing defenders were drawn up in line for the final inspection, every dog started to bark its loudest, and every team, military and civilian, strained at the leash. By amazing instinct they

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knew that up the road was the enemy that had driven them from home, and furiously they bayed for the chance to get back. When the order was given to move off in sections from the right, every team dashed forward at top speed, dragging the soldier drivers along in a mad race for the canal bridge that led to the front. At this crossing wheels were locked, guns overturned, supplies spilled, until the batteries were a tangled, yelping mass. There was some delay as the teams were formed in column and restarted. But, though discipline was now maintained, no persuasion could make the animals walk, and they disappeared up the road at a dog trot which kept the gunners at a double, and they soon came into action as they clashed with the German advance guard, afterward forced back by some of De Mitry's cavalry that were on the Roulers Road.

With sixty damaged field guns, just five to the mile, the Belgian army extended along a twelve-mile front, its left squarely on the coast and its main line through Nieuport along the Yser to Dixmude, with forces on the east bank to guard important crossings. With outposts at Vladsloo and Essen, Ronarch placed his marines before Dixmude to hold the cross roads and railway. Upon him hung the safety of the entire line. A Belgian division, French Reserve cavalry of De Mitry, Bindon's Territorials based at Nieucappelle, and the British Seventh Division continued the thin line of defense across

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Belgium along the winding roads below Dixmude across the Forest of Houthulst, through Zonnebeke, well east of Ypres toward Warneton on the French frontier.

Against this precarious and curving front of over thirty-three miles, four massive columns were soon clashing; while across the British right flank, at direct right angles to the thin line of the Allies, the Twelfth Corps occupied strong advanced positions on the hills, Mont des Chats to Kemmel and Menin, south of Ypres.

But local conditions had changed too quickly for the German General Staff. *Planmaessig* was in command, and when the force across the flank should have deployed from the hills and struck rapidly to crumple up the Allies' line, it waited for the development of frontal attacks, which were delayed for heavy artillery. Byng's cavalry division, helped by some snappy French, audaciously countermarched in a fog, and fell on the unsuspecting left of the flanking Germans, crumpling them up, and driving them from Mont des Chats.

Reënforcements, chiefly Bavarian, were gathering between Lille and Menin. The plateau beyond the Lys, a wedge of ten miles dividing the Allied line in France from the line in Belgium, was vital if the Allied forces in the northern sectors were to be enveloped before help came from the Aisne. "Run no risks. Develop methodically, then smash decisively



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and envelop," was the German maxim which must have made their cavalry leaders weep for missed chances. Byng's surprise stroke was delivered from the west, and as the enemy was cleared from the western half of the plateau, the British cavalry corps pushed across the frontier and dug in as infantry, deploying on the left of the Third Corps in France, with their own left toward Ypres. Thus the fronts were triumphantly linked, and though all the sectors above Arras were thinly held, the entire line from Switzerland to the North Sea, a curving front of 588 miles, was now intact—Joffre's greatest triumph.

But across Belgium the line was a thread. "Help is coming. Hold on at least for forty-eight hours," the commanders had asked of their tired men. The battle raged for 208 hours before effective reënforcements could be spared for Belgium, so great was the need on the heavily pressed front from Arras to Armentières. In a terrific battle, with the odds four to one, and in places eight to one, the line in Belgium had to stand alone. And it stood!

North Belgium seemed strangely like Long Island in parts, just as from Cassel to Arras reminds you of rural New England mixed with Scranton, and from the hills there the Lille section might be mistaken for industrial New Jersey. That is why the war seems so incongruous, even to those of us who have seen

many battles in more relevant settings. In an easy ride along a famous tourist route, north of Arras, you crossed the preliminary chaos which was developing rapidly into three huge battles, or one stupendous battle with three distinct sections. From the staccato of machine guns with bursts of independent firing, the preliminary fighting before Dixmude did not sound serious, and we were near the Belgian forces on the coast roads when a roar of German artillery burst suddenly on the town. And down roads declared impassable, new streams of refugees came flocking through an inferno. They came, too, over the sand dunes and across the fens from Ostend, and from all the "*endes*" and "*kerkes*" of the coast districts, helpless, homeless, and without future, their villages blazing behind them.

The Duke of Wurttemberg had now concentrated a formidable army near Ghent. Before daylight on October 17, huge masses of Swabian infantry rushed through the mist and gained the advanced trenches of the French Marines. Dixmude seemed lost. At daylight, without artillery support, these incomprehensible youngsters went back and drove the Germans out. Owing to the growing concentration there, Colonel Wieschoumes brought over the most serviceable of his powder-scored field guns, and by using French shells, maintained some sort of bombardment in support. The Belgian gunners, how-

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ever, suffered severely under a steady hail of large caliber shells.

The Germans were also pouring along the coast from Ostend, determined to smash their way through the exhausted Belgian line. And when we feared that some one had blundered in allowing Michel's splendid forces to bear the brunt, the growing and persistent grumble of battle farther south showed that the French and British also had their hands full east of Ypres.

From the sand dunes near Nieuport after dark, every hamlet and farm along the front could be seen on fire; and none of us gave Peruyse or Furnes many hours of escape as the weary days and nights dragged on, and we rode across to the Lille front and back, and realized the delays necessary before even an effective battery could be spared to help the Belgian front. Yet in both towns the people seemed unaware of their danger, so firmly does the normal grip the mind.

On October 19, a mysterious thunder crept from the sea through fog and bitter drizzle. Soon the German artillery slackened and ceased fire. I walked over the wet sand dunes, overtaking a chance British officer who seemed as mystified as I was. Heavy guns flashed at sea, but the shell-burst was on land. British monitors had crept in, utterly disorganizing the German coast attack, to the great relief of the First Belgian Division. That night,

however, the enemy made desperate assaults and gained important villages east of the Yser. Admiral Shroder also sent mounted marines from Ostend to patrol and fight, so the legend of Horse Marines has lost its point.

Unfortunately the Germans above Lille, cleared from the Lys, could not be driven from Menin and the heights beyond, and the ineffective breaks on the Lille-Menin-Roulers-Ostend railroad were rapidly repaired, giving them a direct line of communication across Belgium, parallel to the Allies' front. Next to the arrival of the British naval flotilla, a consignment of barbed wire cheered the Allies most! Before Dixmude, the marines, after two counter offensives, drew back and wired their positions. The naval guns, helped by a captive balloon from a warship, now dropped shells even on the German positions at Schoore. But a huge concentration of heavy artillery, which moved from Antwerp to attack Dixmude, could not be reached.

On the 22nd the bombardment ceased, and the new units from Germany were launched to their baptism of fire to carry the blazing city by assault. Urged by patriotism, eager for glory, the devoted youths and older men swept against the position, and not a shot met them until they reached the wire. The Belgians and French then poured their volleys from the broken trenches, repulsing ten desperate charges during the day. French howitzers arrived at the

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front just too late to share the glory of the desperate resistance.

Into the flaming hell of Dixmude, where three thousand shells per hour were falling, Dr. Hector Munro took his volunteer hospital corps from Furnes, with cars and ambulances, and brought out the wounded. With him were Lady Fielding, the son of Baron de Broqueville, Minister of War, some British volunteers, and Arthur Gleason, a Yale man whose writings are well known. I had heard the Belgians talk of "Glisson," and had supposed that they were referring to one of the Gilsons, an heroic Belgian family whose deeds will live in history. I was happy to find that the brave volunteer risking his life there was a friend of earlier days, whose writings have breathed a gentle idealism utterly foreign to modern commercialism and ridiculed as impractical by more than one critic. It is splendid to realize that the author of "The Spirit of Christmas" ignored orders and drove back into Dixmude to drag abandoned wounded from cellars of crashing buildings. His wife and Mrs. Kurcher and Miss Chisholm were attending wounded at the front in a damp cellar in shell-swept Peruyse for two years of war. This little band of young Americans and British have received Belgium's highest decoration from the hands of a grateful king.

At last reënforcements came to the amazing line of three nations. Early on October 24, Grossetti's

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famous division from the Champagne front reached Nieuport and relieved the line. Muddy, bloody, haggard specters crept out of the trenches on the Belgian left, and tramped painfully to rest in Furnes. Many whimpered like children when a band played them in. But after food and sleep and work in reserve, the overstrained Belgian troops went cheerfully back to the trenches, separated from the German lines only by the sluggish canal to Nieuport.

Heavy French artillery was now supporting the First and Fourth Belgian Divisions. But Ronarch, on the Belgian right, was facing another series of desperate drives near Ramscappelle, aimed at Furnes. Covered by concentrated artillery on the 25th, the Germans put pontoons over the Yser and crossed in several places, the exhausted Belgians falling back to the embankment of the Nieuport-Dixmude railroad. Peruyse was soon a flaming ruin, and the direct road to Furnes was threatened. At last the citizens became alarmed and started to leave.

Inundation had saved Flanders before. Mr. Krogge, a quiet government engineer, now reversed the Nieuport sluices, filled in the road passing under the railway, and had gaps blown in the dykes near the shore. High tides and rains soon converted the basin of the lower Yser into a swamp from Dixmude to the sea, with the Belgians holding the embankment, which acted as a dyke and kept the flood from reaching their lines. The Germans soon found the

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water creeping over their newly won territory, but for six days these amazing soldiers waded to night attacks and gained a footing at Ramscappelle.

But on the 31st every available Belgian joined in an offensive as a heavy rain swamped the German area. The enemy losses will never be known. The teams of the field guns were cut loose, drivers and gunners riding to safety while artillery sank in the mud. German infantry under heavy fire had to cross fields waist deep in water. Note also that, despite earlier provocation, several Belgian machine guns stopped firing at the mass of blue-gray infantry squirming and floundering through the flood, because of the wounded, many of whom sank and were drowned. When this district of submerged salt meadow is recovered, the final history of the German retreat from the Yser may be written.

It was interesting after this Belgian effort to read, in American papers that reached the front, the official wireless, from Berlin, October 20, that half the Belgian army had fled to Holland to be interned, one-fourth had deserted, and the balance was demoralized. This same statement added that the Italian volunteers had returned to Italy in disgust, when, in reality, the Garibaldis had been killed leading their heroic contingent in the Argonne; and some eager Italian Reservists then returned home to fight.

Reënforcements for both the British and French

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now arrived, and the thin line of the Allies grew in strength, so that King Albert still ruled over a strip of his country thirty miles long and, roughly, ten miles wide, as well as in the hearts of his people. Below Dixmude and the Marines, a Belgian division and French Reservists held a line based on the canalized Yser toward Ypres, curving eastward on the edge of the Houthulst Forest on the first section of a deep angle of defenses maintained as a protective salient before Ypres by the British. This city was the junction for eleven important roads. The Seventh Division, after an abortive attack on Menin, had retired on Gheluvelt, five miles due east of Ypres, and, with dismounted cavalry on both flanks, had extended back northwest and southwest on a defensive angle to cover the main approaches to the city. Strong columns, which marched down by three roads, were checked by this single division, on the apex of the famous salient which was linked on the south by the dismounted cavalry corps to the left of the Third Corps, across the Ploegsteert woods and over the frontier to Armentières.

The Seventh Division attempted to save Ypres for Belgium by field works, in a small edition of Verdun. Unfortunately Rawlinson had not enough men to create a zone wide enough to keep artillery out of range of the city, and the trenches were dug in a flat country with few natural aids to defense. The Germans were on the eastern half of the Messines



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ridges, from which heavy guns dominated the entire Ypres salient. Artillery from three directions could concentrate on parts of the British line, to prepare for assaults which were delivered night and day without success, as the British held on grimly, their batteries outranged, a barrier of nerve and flesh, waiting for reënforcements.

The First Corps detrained near St. Omer on October 19 and 20. Sir Douglas Haig at once led his Aisne veterans to Belgium, intending to take the offensive by smashing through the extended German front, to push between the Fourth and Sixth Armies. But as his columns were forming in the salient, the Belgians were driven across the Yser, exposing the left of the French cavalry, who fell back west of the forest to preserve their front, but left a gap at the northern base of the salient, at which a fresh enemy corps was thrown. Haig's forces quickly stopped the break. But the Germans, realizing that all was lost if they lost the chance to maneuver, had determined to break the stubborn line. Aëroplanes reported that the roads converging on Ypres were black with German troops, and the First Corps extended on the salient just in time to check a series of desperate assaults by three corps.

In this fighting the Seventh Division on the apex continued to suffer, and some famous British battalions practically ceased to exist. Even now reënforcements did not mean rest. The forces closed

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up their shattered ranks and continued to fight. The cavalry formed the only reserve, galloping to sagging points of the front, riding down enemy elements which sometimes broke through, and dismounting to reënforce a depleted firing line.

On the 23rd and 24th, after repulsing heavy assaults, the British counter attacked. As they harried the confused Germans back to their lines, taking hundreds of prisoners, the struggling, fighting mass, masking hostile machine guns, literally swamped back into the advanced German trenches. The German front collapsed and the British took up the line, reversing the trenches by lifting the sandbags across and throwing over the loosened wire, so that parados became parapets, and they could face and repel the enemy when the fugitives brought back the reserves. Twice now, tired masses broke up and retreated as soon as they came within range, and when the Ninth French Corps detrained and formed on the left of the British, attacks ceased for nine days, during which the Allies reorganized their front under constant shelling.

Their guns were still outranged, so their losses were heavy, and though the lines were six miles from the city, the Germans bombarded Ypres daily. The famous Gothic Halle des Drapiers was naturally the first target, and immortal art gems, including the panels of Pauwels, were destroyed. Section by section the city was pulverized from

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Messines ridge, hundreds of noncombatants being killed as they fled. But passing back from the Belgians' line to France and the Lille front, we heard few details of the terrible fighting on this position bulging between the two. The tired Belgians realized little of the struggle below them, and wondered what their Allies were doing.

Before Lille the fighting had grown in intensity daily. Between Lens and Belgium each week of October marked a special phase. A week wasted by absurd reconnoissance of German cavalry, on a front which cyclist patrols could have covered in a day. A week of slow concentration and a tardy cavalry advance, thwarted by inferior forces of the Allies. Seven days more of battles on every road, as the British forces detrained and moved by the shortest cuts eastward, when the ponderous enemy columns were unfolding (*Entfaltung*). During this, according to theory, their numerical superiority would force any enemy to tremble and prepare a defensive. A smaller boy challenged by a bully may inflict effective punishment by unexpectedly dashing in while the larger antagonist is taking off his coat. So *Deployieren* became involved, the front was irregular and prematurely engaged, and the simultaneous German blows planned, after methodical deployment, with enveloping weight on the flanks, became impossible. The ponderous theory became a farce.

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During the last week in October, sheer weight told a little, and the Allies were pounded back on advanced points, and forced to a defensive on a defined front. But the spectacular sweep of envelopment via Belgium to Pas de Calais was breaking on a thin line of heroes stretched firmly to the sea.

When we first skirted the Lille front, the Arcadian edge to industry was a beautiful countryside lightly swept by looting cavalry. In a week it became a depopulated zone of bewildering conflict. By the end of October the front was marked by a wide furrow of ruin and desolation—a blackened inferno into which strong men marched in thousands, and from which only thin streams of maimed and shattered bodies flowed back. From Hazebrouck, which was behind the center of the wriggling front that twisted its way along the sixty direct miles between Arras and Nieuport, it was an easy ride to any section of the new battle. During the evacuation of a populous countryside and the installation of the different forces, it was possible to keep in touch with the fluctuating campaign until the armies had definitely dug in.

The official reports of these operations are mere history, but every mile, each incident and each minute, teemed with human interest: the country at first was so peaceful and charming, the war so abnormal in that setting. During the first days we could hear only the heavy guns at Arras and sput-

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ters of skirmishing at many places. The skirmish fire grew in volume. From points along the road from Hazebrouck and Bethune we could see peaceful hamlets and farm land spread in replica of the country between Summit and Bernardsville, just as two distant views we had of Lille and its industrial suburbs, from a greater eminence, might well be labeled Newark and the Oranges as seen from the Millburn mountain. But in the hamlets were groups of Allied troops, some making defenses, others desperately fighting. German artillery soon picked up the range and the towns and villages, occupied or unoccupied, were shot to pieces.

We rode down one road where a few French troopers had fought from an irrigation ditch, and had kept a German force from fording the muddy canal. The smart dragoons were angry because they were armored in slime, and though the Boches had fought from a hedge not fifty meters away, not a corpse was discovered. Dead and wounded had undoubtedly been carried away, but the farmers were incredulous and made flippant remarks. The enemy was expected back any minute, but we waited two hours. I found there a German clip with inverted bullets reset in wax, and a Uhlan helmet with a faint 17U marked inside, of a size evidently used by a boy, probably a musician. Down the road we found an abandoned car.

We soon caught the growl of field guns and found

Tommy Atkins going cheerfully into action, as imperturbable as a public school battalion at a Fox Hill maneuver. The good spirits of the British soldiers were amazing. The heavy losses of the previous weeks of fighting at the Marne and Aisne were painfully evident. Junior officers held important commands; some companies were woefully depleted; there were batteries with a single officer. But the men were all cheerful. The tension of trench work was temporarily over; they were fighting again in the open, and during intervals of much tedious work they played football, and marched on singing, when patrols signaled that the road was clear.

Of course, they were professional soldiers, mercenaries, the Germans insist, as if there was nothing greater than the King's shilling a day that impelled enlistment even in times of peace, one of the many important facts which the enemy overlooked in his formulæ of theories. In the armies of the United States and England the open life and lure of adventure fill the ranks with material which the pay alone could never attract. Recall the writings of German military experts during the Spanish War and more recently. After the *Lusitania* crime a great authority stated: "The Yankee army is a polyglot mob. The National Guard has no discipline, few rifles, inferior equipment, and, as proved in Cuba, it will refuse to face the enemy." On such logic the basis of *Kulturpolitik* rests, and ranting

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Imperialists like the Baron von Bodelschwingh-Schwarzenhazel found their arguments.

After the Ulster resignations a few weeks before the war, a careful authority wrote, "If the English Navy is as rotten as their army has proved, the flimsy fabric called the British Empire will topple at the first crack of a German gun." Another expert said, "The so-called British army is a rabble composed of gutter snipes, degenerates, and physical ineffectives, and to our trained eyes it is a joke." But the "joke," in a thin drab line, had jumped out and stopped the advance of an impressive army.

In South Africa the Boers were immensely respected by rank and file, and it was amazing to hear every British soldier express a patronizing pity for the German troops, and respect only for their machine guns. Every man seemed to have a German helmet, which spoke more eloquently than the official reports of the victory of the Marne. Yet there were many tributes also to the way the gray-clad masses advanced in close order against a withering fire, in apparent contempt of death. Of bitterness or anger there was never a trace in the early campaigns. Here and there men had a look of haunting fear, which always means that life holds some special feminine ties. But the British regulars in general were clean-cut, hardy campaigners, used to foreign service, freed by habit from the pangs of homesick-

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ness, and geared for fighting from the drop of the hat. Only there were not enough of them.

The fighting of the British Army and French cavalry in North France from October 12 to the 20th, was so independent in every conception, that it deserves careful study in the United States where co-operative initiative is the keynote of training. Faced by equal, and soon greatly superior forces, the fighting started with scores of minor engagements where individual initiative had full play. Company officers, and frequently sergeants, solved their immediate problems in their own way. The Germans were caught and forced on the defensive, when their perfect machine was geared for invasion. Everywhere the component parts went to pieces, floundered hopelessly and fell back, until they were supported by sheer weight of numbers and guns. On equal terms they would have been defeated. But the British were woefully lacking in artillery and machine guns, and their two small corps with cavalry, in France, were facing an army plus one corps, with prior choice of position, but a disarranged plan.

To a series of impetuous and unexpected attacks, the Germans responded bravely but aimlessly, every one apparently waiting for orders from superior authority. Directly the machine was regearred for the new development, it proved perfect in defense, but that was not victory. When batteries were shelling



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harmless hamlets, British troops dashed across open fields and captured farms and crossroads, while the battery commanders waited for orders to change their target. Cavalry ordered to move by one road waited for orders without latitude, when new conditions developed which any corporal could have solved. The German failure along the Lys was a gigantic farce. But for some days the front was irregular and the fighting most confusing.

On one road French cavalry had advanced two miles without a shot, and had captured many prisoners. Following one detachment of twenty-seven, guarded by French troopers, we were surprised to find a British outpost on a crossroad far behind, eagerly waiting for guns they had sent back to borrow, to clear a wooded hill reported by patrols to be full of the enemy, and soon the scene of a hot fight and heavy losses.

Discipline was forgotten, and as the prisoners prepared for the worst, their hands were shaken, and they were patted on the back, objects of friendly interest. Some one suggested that the prisoners might be hungry, and canned beef, bread, jam, and hard tack soon made a love feast. Two French officers rode up, glaring sternly. The Germans dropped everything and stood at attention. The senior officer's face softened. "*Continuez—mes enfants,*" he said. Then tins of English cigarettes were produced, a solace to men who had not smoked for three

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weeks. Their regiment had made forced marches from Lorraine, and was then put on outpost duty. Alas, a scene like this could not have happened a few weeks later when, as obedient cogs in a ruthless machine, men similar to these had shot the wounded and launched poison gas.

Gradually the trenches grew deeper, positions were consolidated, and the rival lines ran in parallel furrows along the new front. In many villages finally secured by the Allies there was ample evidence of the brutal terrorism of Prussian militarism.

I could fill volumes with interesting incidents. Across the Belgian frontier I recalled a small hotel kept by a Yorkshire man. With an equally hungry British supply officer, I led the way. Most of the people had gone, but the hotel and the owner were there. "Food? Where could he get it?" He had a little ham, tea without milk, and bread a week old. But we feasted. Later, riding past a French force holding a road, an orderly requested the officer's presence. The commandant had a few odds and ends to hand over—field glasses; a coat and a map dropped by a British cavalry officer who was shot off his horse, but who revived and insisted on galloping after his men; also three rifles, and two stray privates. Each Tommy Atkins looked sheepish, saluted, but said nothing.

Out of earshot the officer questioned the "desert-

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ers." One had volunteered to take hot coffee to the outer trenches. He missed his guide post, crossed to a match flare and heard men talking German. Three soldiers sprang from a trench and challenged. It was pitch dark, so he merely handed over the coffee, which they took without question, and started back to his lines. But his people opened fire every time he approached. He lay outside for three days before he could get in, and then reached the French force and was still there.

The other man, a finely built private of a Yorkshire regiment, had crawled over to a French trench to repay borrowed bread. As a sergeant lifted his head to talk, a sharpshooter's bullet killed him. An officer moved over to catch the body, and was wounded. So Tommy volunteered to squirm out and stalk the sniper. He finally located him far on the flank in a little scoop behind a loopholed intrenching tool. In the duel one bullet plowed his scalp, but the shield stopped all his shots. So he raised himself, toppled in a heap, and lay with his gun ready. And in two places advanced snipers lifted themselves to look at the "kill." He shot one through the head; one, in the shoulder. This started shooting from friend and enemy, so he had to wait until dark. His wounded man began to moan, so he went over. "Blowed if he didn't think I came to finish him, and he hit me a wallop," he said indignantly. But he patched the wound, and a truce,

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and they got in. The outposts were French. "I thought myself a bit of a hero, but they made me a prisoner too," added the soldier.

The French here had few rations. The first soldier was half dead with hunger, so we took him back to a village and found a stylishly dressed Parisienne, just from New York, helping with the wounded in deep mud over her dainty shoes, and the wounded German eating one of her two hundred nickel packets of Baker's chocolate. The rival snipers were soon chatting famously by signs, until a French officer stopped the tête-à-tête. Here again all the wounded enemy were being well treated by the French, and at all points I have seen the same thing. The Yorkshire private had a ridge across his scalp that would have fractured an African skull.

The soldiers will have their jokes. We heard a gun boom. "Chicken for dinner," said a Cockney. "What?" "Well, I just heard von Kluck." On some Sunday nights, in a lull, the British and Germans sang hymns together, with different words to the many sacred tunes they have in common. The French have a song about Rosalie (their bayonet). In perfect French, voices afterward inquired about the damsel's health, and the *pioupious* promised to bring the lady over one day and introduce her. They did a few nights afterward. "'Ow's Kaiser Bill?" yelled a Tommy. "With his troops. Where's George?" was the swift repartee in Eng-

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lish. But the King was soon closer to the front than the Kaiser has ever ventured.

At one town I met several new French recruits waiting to be allocated. Among them were five Americans, two from college. These promising lads were spending a vacation on Gloucester whalers off Cape Verde, when they heard of the war. They jumped ship at Grand Canary and, as the shortest road to the front, attested at the consulate as sons of unnaturalized Frenchmen in America, and so finished their adventurous trip by being sent to France to fight.

The efforts of the French to care for their own and Belgian refugees, and to move them from the danger zone, were touching. We had just seen the mass of bodies where spies had derailed a train, when news came that the *Amiral Ganteaume*, engaged in moving the helpless and homeless from Dunkirk and Calais to Havre where they could have better care, had been torpedoed off Grinez with 2,200 women and children on board, on October 25. Luckily the Folkestone mail boat, the *Queen*, left France late, and by chance was able to rescue most of the helpless in a heavy sea, though forty lives were sacrificed. Embedded in the wreckage was a fragment of steel bearing the words "*Ruder unten Sperrung.*" This was an act of ruthless barbarity, for the decks were black with women, and no mistake was possible. The refugees lost the few treas-

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ures that they had saved from their destroyed homes. They were taken to Folkestone, a town which then sheltered 80,000 Belgian refugees, and which turned its splendid hotels over to the sick and wounded—a great example of sympathetic hospitality.

The Indian divisions came up from Orleans October 24 to act in reserve of the Second Corps, which had been forced to modify its front and which had no reserves. But a new effort of the enemy to regain Mont des Chats and break through the left of the Third Corps just across the frontier called a brigade to Belgium; while against Dorrien's new line a massed attack captured Neuve Chapelle and was checked with difficulty as it attempted to push down the road to Bethune on the 27th, just as a British attack on La Bassée had broken down before machine guns masked in brick fields. Next day, the Indians moved into line, regained some lost ground, and straightened the line.

After the arrival of the Indian Corps, the Meerut and Lahore divisions under "Jim" Willcocks, the Kiplingesque touch was no longer lacking. The camps of Hindus, Sikhs, and Mohammedans preserved their startling individuality, and our passing glances proved the tact with which the British hold the loyal coöperation of Oriental races. Everything had been done to meet the rigid fastidiousness of caste. Herds of goats were sent up to be slaughtered according to ritual, for the Hindus must not

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look on the flesh of cattle. The Mohammedan revolts at pork, the British soldier must have beef and bacon, and the Sikh can only face canned mutton. The Mohammedan smokes, but drinks tea only; to the Sikh, tobacco is unclean.

The regiments of each race are childishly jealous of each other. Units taunted each other before attacks or enjoyed a mad race to the German trenches, afterward quarreling over the winner until their brigadier, a Solomon, declared it a dead heat. These men were led by the princes of their own states, with a leaven of British officers. Each command was voluntarily offered for active service after a conference of the heads of Indian states passively hostile to each other by tradition, nationality, and religion. They came from the Himalayas and the scorching plains of Hindustan—Beluchis, Sikhs, Dogras, Pathans, Jats, and mild Bengalis, with the snappy Gorkas, a fighting cousin of the Jap. The Punjab, Bengal, Bombay, and Madras each contributed their contingents. Among the maharajas who were at the front were Sir Pertab Singh, Regent of Jodhpur, a veteran soldier of '71, and the Maharaja of Jodhpur, aged eighteen, commanding the famous cavalry of his state.

*Hassgesang gegen England!* Cheer the subtlety of 77 Wilhelmstrasse! Airships persistently bombarded the lines of the high caste Aryan Hindus with leaflets in Urdu announcing that a Holy War

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on England had been declared by the Sheik-ul-Islam at Mecca. This effort was worthy of the intelligence which sent a one-armed Prussian officer to Cuba to assure the American soldiers privately that an attack on Santiago was hopeless and the climate deadly—propaganda which made this gentleman an indignant guest of Uncle Sam until he could be sent north.

By November 1, the Germans had four active and five reserve corps, a marine division, and a cavalry corps in Belgium. The Bavarians had five active and two and a half reserve corps, and cavalry between Arras and Belgium. Four active and one and a half reserve corps were between Arras and the Somme in the Second Army. Ten active and nine reserve corps were on the Oise and Aisne front to the Verdun sectors, where the Crown Prince's Fifth Army formed the curving link with the forces covering the frontier. A total of fifty-two corps were in the Franco-Belgian area.



## CHAPTER VII

### DEADLOCK

RECALL Bloch's forgotten prophecy that modern war must degenerate into siege operations, barren of decisive results and demanding campaigns that can be ended only by exhaustion of the resources of one or both sides. October crept out and November dawned in icy drizzle, fog and sleet that inaugurated a winter of unprecedented severity. Each side grew stronger, each side dug in, and offensives launched in either direction failed.

But the Teuton armies refused to bow to predestined conditions. Their masses were "invincible," and must conquer. Their plan of breaking up the Allied left above Noyon had failed. The hope of swarming like a flood above Arras had also been chastened. Thwarted by the British rush to North France and ten days of failure in a series of desperate attacks at La Bassée, advance below Lille was stopped.

But hills dominating the narrow straits of Dover and the port of Calais, which legend says was printed across the heart of one ambitious queen, could be reached from Belgium across a few miles

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of low land and sand dunes. A thin exposed line of defense alone barred the way to the point where siege guns and close submarine bases could still strike a blow at British security.

In early November, therefore, battering rams of men were mobilized in Belgium to break through. Twelve army corps and four corps of cavalry gathered north of Lille to do the work.

The French Ninth Corps, forming on the British left, took over the northern sector of the Ypres defenses, consolidating with Grossetti's division and other units to form the Eighth French Army under General Dubail. The first blow of the November battle was given by three corps hurled against the British at Gheluvelt, apex of the salient, due east of Ypres. With more bravery than skill, companies of the highly educated volunteers supplementing the Ersatz regiments led the advance. The German patriots, famous in art, science and finance, led the first assault after a terrific howitzer fire had crumpled up parts of the British trenches. But with equal fortitude the shaken British were clinging to the debris, withholding their fire as the line moved forward singing the national hymn, until within battle-sight range. Then a burst of magazine fire shattered the German formation.

Again a cascade of high explosives swept the British position; trenches caved in; survivors were buried alive in a mass of sand and human debris.

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But again as massed lines charged, the dogged British soldiers shattered the formation. These German volunteers fought with a sublime devotion to their cause and country, with a zeal that made the chivalrous British and French risk their lives to drag wounded survivors to safety and give them the place of honor in the field hospitals.

Dazed and stunned by hours of renewed bombardment when the genius of Krupp, from a safe distance, dropped heavy shells of such size and in such profusion that their bursting alone made the actual reports of the Allies' guns in reply sound like firecrackers versus thunder, the British continued to hold. They were pitifully supported by inadequate field guns soon masked and checked as the Germans increased their range and diverted their shower of projectiles from the trenches to the batteries in rear and covered the advance of four columns of Teuton soldiers from Hoelbeck, from the Belgian village America, which few have discovered, and points on the Menin-Ypres road. These swept forward in successive waves of men in close order, following the Japanese idea. The first line was annihilated; the second was close to the parapets before it dissolved in bloody groups; the third was tearing through the shell-wrecked barbed barricade and closing with the bayonet before it received attention, and during this struggle the fourth line dashed in intact, overwhelming a big section of the line and capturing Ghelu-

velt, the apex of the defense. Through the breach in the British lines eager German reënforcements poured up the Ypres road. But the field artillery continued the battle alone, with case shot, many guns being run forward by hand, inflicting and receiving terrible losses as it smashed formations, until staff officers gathered mixed forces even from the hospitals and charged, retaking Gheluvelt with the bayonet. As the entire front was engaged by covering attacks, no help could be spared from other sectors.

Next day these sorry, improvised forces were hard pressed in the broken trenches, without support under more extended assaults. With roads almost impassable on foot, British cavalry were ordered to go up mounted from their billets, tie their horses and move to the front to reënforce the line. But reviving the tradition of the Battle of the Spurs once fought in Flanders, the troopers rode right up into action in the Zillebeke woods, now swarming with the enemy. With a cheer they charged among the trees, many using spades which in trench work were often mightier than the sword. The French cavalry, following them, also broke into a gallop, and as the action of machine guns was retarded by the woods, they also rode the Germans down and cleared the section. During the action the German Fifteenth Corps, adequately supported by artillery, were thrice repulsed when storming a wide sector held only by a depleted brigade. And the line of the Allies was then

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so thin that there were no resting reserves—merely supports always under shell fire.

On November 10 airmen reported great activity at Menin. The presence of a protective air flotilla announced the arrival of the Kaiser. Daybreak on the 11th opened a terrific bombardment of both the British and the French lines, southeast and northeast of Ypres. An overwhelming battering ram was prepared, backed by huge guns from Antwerp, and tipped by the First and Fourth Brigades of Prussian Guards brought over from Arras.

At a given signal a bombardment engaged every sector along the north front, and then the huge bolt of men was launched at the British line, again toward Gheluvelt. Earlier days had depleted the stock of British shells, and ten days of desperate fighting had ruined several of the pitifully few machine guns, when the Guards charged in successive waves. The first mass was swept away; the second reached the shaken trenches with the bayonet; the third line swept over men fighting desperately for their lives, and went cheering madly across the wooded district toward the city.

But their formation was broken in crossing the trenches; the ground was a quagmire from constant rain, and they were soon masking their own guns. Field guns, pushed through the mud, met them. Dismounted Horse Guards, Northampton reservists four months from their cobbler's benches, Gloucester

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farmers, cotton spinners of the Lancasters, and the Midget Rifles, pigmies against the six-foot Prussians, came up from different directions, and with scant formations went into the fray. For two hours fighting more like a desperate riot raged, a conflict fatal for troops trained in close-order formation. Without orders, many French soldiers also fought like lions as individuals until the bewildered Guards staggered back over the captured trenches filled chiefly with dead and wounded.

Before the British could repair their trenches two fresh assaults were made by other brigades, but these also were both repulsed. At daybreak the Guards, reënforced, determined to retrieve their defeat by an attack against the French on the north-east. The result was the same, for though the last two masses broke through, the fire of the famous 75 guns broke the formation and morale of the invaders. Then the supports, including cooks and lightly wounded, were loosed, and expelled them with the bayonet.

The battle losses of the Germans were appalling. But their superiority in heavy artillery and machine guns enabled them to maintain their defensive points with a minimum of exposure. On normal days their casualties were trivial, while the losses of the Allies maintained a heavy average, and continued until they could create and train adequate heavy field artillery, which was necessarily a tedious and difficult

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process after years of pacific army estimates. In October that small British army lost 3,013 officers and 69,017 men, in saving Flanders.

During these days of stress Lord Roberts was in France visiting his East Indian comrades. Ask Tommy Atkins if exposure in the icy wind killed this veteran hero amid the roar of the guns and among the men he loved so well. He will tell you that "Bobs" died of a broken heart. The aged Field Marshal found remnants of battalions that he had once led to victory, depleted by losses of ninety per cent. What must his emotions have been when he saw the result of his neglected warnings? For years he prophesied that this war would come unless the British maintained a large reserve army with full equipment, which would be a guaranty of peace. His advice was derided by pacifists. The statesmen who were feverishly trying to create a huge army overnight had once been his most bitter opponents.

Measures for modernizing and doubling the British artillery establishment were voted down by a party tinged with socialism and theoretical ideals, when the changes in the Balkans, and Austria's jealousy of Servian aspirations, had made the risk of war acute. With a prepared England in the background, who can believe that the Central Powers would have chosen war instead of arbitration? And now the enemy was practically in sight of the Chan-

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nel ports, and living bodies formed the barrier which should have been held by potential guns and screens of shells. Military preparation may not avert war, but the lack of it will surely invite hostilities. Broadway audiences ridiculed the play "The Englishman's Home," but National Guard officers advised their men to see it, for its lessons were international, and the scenes might well have been laid in any New York suburb.

Besides Lord Roberts, who died on November 14, the fall campaign claimed other victims known in the United States. The Duke of Hesse was killed on the Mont des Chats; Julius Foehr, once popular manager of the North German Lloyd, fell when leading his platoon of the King Karl Grenadiers in the desperate Yser fighting. On the British side, Prince Maurice of Battenberg, cousin of King George and brother of the Queen of Spain, and as modest and brave as his father who lost his life in the Ashanti Expedition, was mortally wounded. Lieutenant St. George, grandson of G. F. Baker, the New York banker, was killed in the fight with the Prussian Guards before Ypres.

In November a severe winter set in. Life along the opposing lines became a nightmare of horror, with every trench a ditch of half-frozen water which all ingenuity failed to overcome. Blocked in their advance to the sea across Belgium, the Germans made a final effort to smash through the British lines



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before Lille in December, the brunt of which first fell on the forces from India and the British brigades on the La Bassée roads. Misled by the transfer of certain forces to Ypres, the Bavarians concentrated suddenly and launched one of their human battering rams behind a curtain of shells. The advanced trenches were overwhelmed and the wounded survivors were stamped on and beaten to death in a frenzy of rage. The British recaptured most of their trenches, but at heavy cost, and the Germans had gained some ground.

But it was the last flicker of Germany's desperate battle for the coast, and the offensives simmered down to a monotonous defensive, with artillery exchanges and merciless sniping on both sides to relieve trench tedium. Early in December the French made a surprise attack on Vermelles, which they captured after a terrific hand-to-hand fight, strengthening their junction with the British, and gaining the first step on the way to Lens.

A succession of heavy snowstorms was punctuated by thaws which added greatly to the suffering of the soldiers. Protected by the morass before them, the Germans now reaped the benefit of their numerous machine guns, maintaining miles of advanced lines with light forces, and withdrawing the bulk of their troops to comparative comfort behind the firing line. Huge reënforcements were also sent to the east front, since costly experience had taught them how

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slender a line could maintain a defense against overwhelming odds.

Christmas awoke the strongest whisper of international brotherhood heard in the war. By mutual consent firing stopped at midnight, and Christmas morning brought many heads above the opposing trenches, and a tacit truce was actuated by a common impulse. Along the British front officers and men of both armies were soon flocking across the danger zone, grasping hands and exchanging gifts. If the fate of nations could be decided by the rank and file, peace and a lasting friendship would have been struck up then. Boers and Britons have made a lasting peace because local conditions gave those who actually fought on both sides a great part in the final adjustment. In Germany a newspaper that printed a photograph of the rival soldiers fraternizing was suppressed. But at midnight the truce ended, and the tiresome vigil in trenches knee-deep in icy water was resumed, with hundreds of victims of frostbite daily, and hospitals busy with amputations.

The new year started with the newspaper chatter of a great Allied offensive, which made those who knew conditions smile. While the Allies had checked Germany's amazing preparation with a defined boundary, their successes had been chiefly defensive, at an appalling cost. With enough ammunition an enemy, numerically vastly inferior, can

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maintain a fortified line. The British had agreed to land an expeditionary force of 150,000 men. In six months their losses were almost double that number, and they were maintaining an army of 350,000 on a line short if estimated by miles, but difficult and costly, when we considered the exposed position in Flanders, and the operations which virtually entailed the siege of Lille—in direct communication with Berlin, and one of the most formidable points of German defense.

Many were scoffing at the delay in equipping Kitchener's new army. The first million rifles ordered in the United States were promised for delivery in nine months to a year. Dies necessary to make parts of machine guns could only be supplied in six months. For some months nearly three millions of the finest men in the British Isles were drilling with old rifles and sticks while government plants, working night and day, were just able to meet the wastage of rifles at the front and supply enough weapons for effective target practice for the new army. Japanese rifles bridged one gap, but it needed a year to create factories to turn out an ample supply, and two years for adequate artillery and shells.

On January 8, after a rainstorm, the Aisne was in flood, temporary bridges were swept away, and the Germans rushed storm troops by rail to Laon for a surprise attack on the unsupported French. The

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first assault near Soissons was a great success. A huge gap was made in the French line, and trains rushed reënforcements to the scene, while the German press hinted at a new drive on Paris. But on the hills south of the river the French reserves checked the advance, though the enemy, until 1917, maintained a bridge head to the south bank, and some of the high ground, up which the British fought their way after the battle of the Marne, was lost.

Farther west, across Champagne, as winter's grip relaxed, the French took the offensive, massing their artillery to maintain a *rideau de fer*, section by section, along a five-mile front across Perthes to Beausejour Farm, and pushing the German trenches back by persistent infantry assaults to straighten the front.

In March, General French decided upon a bold stroke in north France against the tangle of helmets and crossroads between La Bassée and Laventie, on the end of the Aubers Ridge, the key to many minor roads to Lille, and directly north of and flanking the strong German position at La Bassée which barred the *route nationale* from Lens north, and the main road from Bethune to Lille.

The British cavalry had been relieving the worn French Ninth Corps in Belgium, which was rested and refitted. The Fifth Corps had reënforced the depleted Third Corps before Lille. The Canadian contingent had also landed and afforded fresh re-

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serves. During the winter also a new British air fleet had been equipped and trained and new flotillas were formed, which assumed superiority over the *aéroplanes* of the enemy. Taube after Taube was shot down, and effective air patrols kept every hostile flier away while the new concentration was made. They also destroyed two important forts of Lille used by the enemy for ammunition stores.

On a narrow front 600 guns were massed on the line opposite Neuve Chapelle, and picked brigades of General Haig's corps were brought down and concentrated for a surprise attack March 10. Neuve Chapelle was stormed and captured, the reserve line was breached, and in places the front was penetrated to the depth of a mile. But on some sections *redoubts* on the second line resisted stubbornly and the irregular front made effective artillery support difficult. Three hours were lost in readjusting the front, covering the flanks of the far advanced line, and rearranging the artillery schedule in a dense fog which prevented signaling; then heavy German reinforcements checked further progress. Two thousand prisoners were taken with machine guns and trench mortars, and the German losses were heavy, though at exposed points they had retreated skillfully in echelon, an effect of their discipline which restrained the suicidal scramble so frequent in evacuating trenches. The British losses were also heavy, 572 officers and 12,230 men, a large

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proportion of the strength actually on the firing line. But in this vigorous, though not extended, battle, the artillery had used more ammunition than the supply during the entire South African War.

In one fight before Ypres a British battalion fired a million rounds. On the firing line during recent state maneuvers the incessant cry of army officers attached to the National Guard was "Faster, faster." It must be remembered that, though fire superiority must be maintained, it is often difficult to keep advanced trenches supplied in action when communicating trenches are muddy and almost impassable for tired men with cases of ammunition. For modern conditions fire discipline is often more important than rigid accuracy, and the time in the National Guard once devoted to creating sharpshooters and experts, is now used in training only for trench sniping; while the imperative study of reserving fire, delivering effective bursts of aimed fire, catching moving targets in open order, and beating down an attack with sweeping fire was generally neglected until recently. In this period also the shooting of half trained units, brought up at a critical period, has proved more effective than the volleys of trained men, aiming more deliberately, but at wrong range. Practice in judging ranges quickly has been neglected in the National Guard. All over England shooting galleries have sprung up with targets of moving pictures. Many of the new soldiers

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had already learned to take quick sights at moving objects, and from them the best sharpshooters have been produced.

In advancing, also, crouching, crawling or rolling to new positions is a part of the general training. But under modern conditions and flat trajectory, time is the great factor, and a rapid dash across an exposed zone is less fatal than to squirm laboriously over. Against shell fire the British reserves advance in squad and platoon columns, as in American tactics, with great success.

The lesson of Neuve Chapelle woke the British Government up to the crying need of ammunition and heavy artillery if ascendancy was to be gained. Shells by the million, more potential than shrapnel, were needed, and it was obvious that there would be no drive forward until artillery had been created wholesale.

On April 17 the British captured Hill 60, a low ridge south of Ypres. This success started a new and determined German drive at the salient. Reinforcements came from Lille and Arras, and after two days' preliminary shelling, which drew strong forces to repel the expected assault, the Germans on the 22nd astonished the world by the first attack with asphyxiating gas. This first struck the French along the Pilkem road. The trench periscopes showed a yellow vapor floating toward the trenches. Heavier than air, propelled by a light wind, the

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deadly fumes choked the men in the first line, in terrible agony. The British saw the French in the second line rushing back in confusion while the Germans mowed down the gasping men as they retired, and then charged and seized the empty trenches. This exposed the flank of the Canadian division on the right to an assault before which a big section of the line sagged and crumbled, the Germans bayonetting the gunners of a heavy battery in support. But the Canadians rallied and retook the guns, and after a night of confusion and desperate fighting, the Allies formed a modified line across the captured gap and held it.

But for several days the wind favored the use of gas. The devilish cylinders were used on different sections with success, and the point of the salient was reduced for three miles in a battle of sixteen days, giving the enemy low but important ridges. But in three days British women had made a million respirators for the troops, sufficient for their entire battle front, and though in the strongest fumes men still died in agony or lingered for three days and nights of torture while their lungs dissolved, reserves behind the firing line were now able to rush through the thinning fumes so that Ypres was not captured after forty assaults.

“What king going to make war . . . sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with



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twenty thousand?" Neither the French nor the British had correctly estimated the forces required to curb a German invasion. The anticipation of essential preparations which took six months to perfect would have checked the invaders in Belgium and divided their immense formation on the Meuse.

But at the close of the winter campaign the Germans realized that their invasion on the west front had reached its limit, and, while the Allies gathered strength for a determined offensive, they devoted their ingenuity to make the occupied territory secure. With a special force of 250,000 pioneers and adequate machinery and material, the most vulnerable sections of the 588 intrenched miles of the western front, maintained chiefly in foreign territory, were turned into massive fortifications. Trenches were scientifically excavated by machinery, and miles of main trenches were laid out in concrete. Machine guns remained in deep vaults, secure from preparatory bombardment, to be rushed by ladder to the surface when the shell fire ceased, and the line of attack approached. The main lines were dry and well drained, and in many cases deep tunnels extended from fortified hills to advance trenches. While the Allies were developing heavy artillery, the Germans were securing their guns in steel casemates, screened and invisible in earthworks, and making reserve battery positions of concrete deeply padded with sand for their heavy guns and howitzers

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on branch lines to main railways by which artillery and shells could be rapidly gathered at any section of the front.

Starfish defenses, spacious chambers underground, electrically lighted, ventilated and heated, with tunnels radiating in all directions to the surface, to advance trenches, to the flanks and to reserve lines in rear, were a special feature and insured adequate cover, warm quarters for the troops and secure approaches to any section, front, flank or rear.

During the campaign of 1915, outlined in the following chapter, the French steadily reorganized their army and offset the handicaps imposed by the invasion which covered the homes of nine million people, seventy per cent. of both the coal and steel production of France and one-third of the horse power of her machinery. Two thousand three hundred and eleven French towns and villages were within the German lines—surely a concrete ideal for American troops to help restore them to a sister republic!

Experience and time soon greatly improved conditions at the front. Joffre remolded his army at the top. Ability was the only test. He summarily retired twenty-four generals in the first two phases, eleven of them divisional commanders. Obscure officers who had showed marked ability were jumped to important commands, and after its terrible vicissi-

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tudes in 1914 the spirit of the French army in 1915 proved the confidence all ranks retained in their leader. The forces also discarded their fatally brilliant uniforms, which were replaced by a cloth of invisible blue-gray shot with fine tricolor threads for tradition. This radically lightened the heavy casualty lists, which were soon further lessened by the adoption of the Adrien casque, a light steel helmet which reduced the losses from shell fire in the trenches. France had only 300 heavy guns in 1914; she had 6,200 in 1917.

The changes on the British front were soon amazing. As the original establishment of the regular army was seriously depleted, it was maintained by a magnificent type of recruits with a stratum of ex-soldiers. It was then augmented by volunteer Territorial regiments which were sent over to act in reserve. After a short training near the front, they were needed in the first line, where they soon equaled the regular troops. The London Scottish, the first volunteers in France and first in the firing line, went up at a critical period at Ypres just as a section south of the salient was broken. They fixed bayonets, dashed through the shell zone and definitely repulsed the massed line of Germans who had poured through the gap. The London Rifle Brigade, the Artists, the Honourable Artillery Company, the Inns of Court Lawyers, Queen's Westminsters and other crack London battalions were soon followed by Ter-

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ritorial volunteer regiments from all sections of the country, and all have covered themselves with glory. The percentage of older men in the ranks was large. The lesson answered those critics in the United States who doubted the value of the National Guard.

If the British seemed slow in getting their stride, their progress was sure. The Tommy Atkins of history was soon replaced by average citizens. Through the voluntary system hundreds of thousands of the most promising men in the country joined the Colors. The picked men sent out to augment the first line of the army had attained an average of physical fitness and intelligence previously unsurpassed in history. By careful selection, Kitchener's first million had mobilized the cream of the man-power of the Empire, and by the incorporation of successive battalions in the old regiments they assumed the pride of old traditions, and by simple elasticity the original establishment absorbed its millions.

In every branch of equipment, also, the wonderful German machine was outstripped. Every article had been selected to further the comfort, health and efficiency of the men at the front under the special requirements of the campaign. It was an impressive sight to see the first splendid regiments in France, men of every creed and class in the ranks, recruited under stringent physical standards, perfect in drill and equipment. History would indeed have

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been different if one quarter of those voluntary reserves had been organized to become available in the early open days when quality counted more. The army had now to sacrifice itself in the generally fruitless waste of trench warfare.

The loss of officers among both French and British was appalling. The Germans adopted stringent measures to lessen the drain, and the days when some devoted leaders actually rode to certain death in attack at the head of the massed infantry were soon over. Prisoners soon complained that their officers were forced to remain in the rear in attacks. But in many battles twelve per cent of British losses have been officers, and a serious disproportion continues.

The patriotism which has maintained state regiments of special efficiency with little Federal aid or encouragement—organizations like the Seventh New York and the Boston Cadets—has in three wars provided the United States with material for creating officers by a stroke of the pen. In the Civil War nearly 800 Seventh men were given commissions without a notorious failure, and despite cruel misunderstandings which kept the regiment at home unwillingly in the Spanish War, 300 of its members went out as officers, and four gained undying fame by rallying a shattered column and leading it to victory when at San Juan a small Spanish force on a narrow front was inflicting a loss of 120 men a minute.

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With their available supply of officers sadly impaired, the British now followed this example. The famous volunteer regiment, the Artists' Rifles, under the Territorial System the Twenty-eighth London, went to the front 1,200 strong. The regular army, in peace, patronized the volunteers, but in the hour of need examination proved that most of the Artists were eligible for commissions, and they received wholesale promotion. The experiment proved successful. The Depot Battalion therefore sent its trained drafts out, and the organization was made an Officers' Training Corps, with a special staff which was soon producing a hundred lieutenants a month for the regular army. Other first-class volunteer regiments followed suit and bridged the gap when a supply of trained officers was vital to maintain efficiency at the front. For the later battalions the officers are chiefly men who enlisted as privates and gained the nomination by sheer ability in the field, so the new troops are trained and led by men of actual experience.

It is also interesting to note that depot battalions of many famous regiments recruited and trained thousands of men especially selected, of the caliber suitable to uphold regimental tradition. This has supplied high-class troops for special emergency and might well be copied in the United States now by encouraging the recruiting of men by special organizations to supplement the draft.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BATTLES OF 1915—ARGONNE—ARTOIS—LOOS— CHAMPAGNE

ALONG the Franco-German frontier from Switzerland north the Germans were chiefly intrenched on their own soil, with the French holding a long strip of Lower Alsace, in sight of the Rhine, with guns dominating but sparing Altkirch, and the tricolor again waving over some Alsatian towns on the border. Hartmanns-Weilerkopf and other heights in the Vosges were shared by both armies where the French fought their way to the top but were unable to force the Germans down on the other side. The French held Metzeral and maintained the chief approaches to Colmar, points invaluable for pushing the war on German soil. Farther north, the areas so terribly devastated in the early invasion were solidly French again, with farming going on and people repairing homes in reach of the guns, and the Germans holding on the edge of the frontier up to Pont-à-Mousson where the St. Mihiel salient begins. Guns on the outer Metz defenses enfiladed the French line and checked all attacks to expel this wedge.

The extraordinary efforts made to isolate and invest Verdun at long range by driving in south of

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the fortress, and on the west of the wide ellipse of trenches protecting it, marked the German offensives of 1915. Aiming at Les Eparges, and supported by the Foot Artillery of the Prussian Inspection with heavy guns, the forces from Metz under General Strantz gained important positions early in the year. Gas clouds played the chief part. But the French regained the heights of Les Eparges, enfilading the advance along the valley of Longeau, though much ground was gained by the enemy.

These efforts were seconded by the army of the Crown Prince on the front extending north of the fortress, through Etain, Montfaucon and Varennes and across the Argonne hog's-back. Unable to make progress against the immediate outworks of Verdun created and maintained by Sarrail, the royal general soon concentrated his efforts on his right wing. After the Marne battle the Fifth German Army had uncovered the railroad from Chalons to Verdun and lost the defile of Les Islettes, Clermont, and control of the Vienna road near their present front far from the main approaches to the fortress and the best roads across the forest, though the French pursuit had ended ten miles south of their present line.

After many futile assaults the Crown Prince made a determined drive from Varennes February 16, which was decisively checked and followed by a counter offensive by the French, who charged the in-



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trenched slope of Vauquois with the bayonet February 28 and reached the edge of the village, but were forced back. They extended the sphere of their bombardment, and broke down the flanking fire, while the Tenth Division, sworn to get back to Vauquois, fought night and day until March 5, when they seized the houses opposite the main German line where artillery fire was restricted and counter attacks by the Kaiser's One Hundred and Twentieth Wurttemberg could not dislodge them. The French communications in the valley were no longer dominated, and their guns could now sweep the Four de Paris road.

For several weeks comparative quiet reigned on both fronts. More heavy guns reached the east front while in the Argonne; romantic bridle paths were turned into military roads. Von Mudra, Germany's leading military engineer, was in charge of the work. The Crown Prince concentrated his men and artillery on the western edge of the Forest, aiming at the main communications from Champagne to Verdun. On June 20 the old battle was renewed below Varennes with gas and massed attacks, but the operations were a mask west of which the main effort was made.

General Sarraill had been transferred to the Dardanelles when his defenses received their second tribute by the entire change of attack. Miles from Verdun the Crown Prince had concentrated the Six-

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teenth Army Corps to drive between La Grurie and the Four de Paris. Clouds of deadly chlorine and sulphur chloride, released at dawn, surprised and suffocated the men in the French trenches on a front of four miles. Tons of heavy projectiles rained through the gas clouds, tearing up the wire and breaking up the French reserves.

Donning their masks, driblets of French reserves, however, reached the trenches, and standing among their writhing comrades, poured determined volleys into the first mass of Germans, stopping desperate charges which had been delayed by the density of the gas. Two mines were exploded at Bagatelle, and only there was the front pierced and two sections of trenches occupied.

For two weeks the new artillery positions belched heavy shells, during which the French strengthened their reserve positions, brought up fresh field batteries, and withdrew their men secretly from the front trenches. One artillery post alone recorded the receipt of 1,826 large shells, only eleven of which affected the cleverly screened battery. One shell penetrated the dugout of the French staff, but was *blindganger* and did no damage. Then clouds of gas descended on the torn, evacuated trenches on which every French field gun was also ranged, and when the massed Germans delivered the assault they were met and repulsed by the rapid fire of the 75's, while the soldiers held the reserve lines in compara-

tive security. Charge after charge was broken up, but on a mile front the Germans finally gained a footing at night in the old trenches. But every effort to extend the gain was beaten down by artillery, and the German loss was heavy for a negligible gain.

Undeterred by his casualties, telegraphing his father "We are resuming the offensive that we love," telling his troops that they would celebrate the war's anniversary by breaking through, the Crown Prince resumed operations in the Argonne August 1. The front was now more complicated, the opposing trenches frequently close, and the Germans employed the new *flammenwerfer* which poured blazing liquid on the French while a shell curtain checked the reserves. The inferno defies the imagination. The German infantry rushed the trenches, and ended the misery of men who fought in blind frenzy with eyes burnt out, or squirmed in helpless agony with flesh scorched off to the bone. Masses of troops poured into the lines, and on two sides assailed and captured Hill 213, and a strong footing was gained in the French lines toward St. Hubert.

But the French infantry saw some of their burned comrades and were stirred to fury. Their attempts to regain the hill were swept away, but they recaptured all their main trenches, and restored the line.

Desperate bravery, huge losses, and barbarous tactics signalized the futile efforts to invest Verdun.

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But farmers within the bastion of fieldworks and forts with a face of seventy-two miles, gathered the second harvest in the lines, hardly hearing a gun, and the only casualty in the city was one girl killed by an aëroplane bomb.

The great French effort, extending over 1915, was aimed at the huge tangle of defenses and earthworks pushed westward between Arras and Lens along the series of hills and ridges in an almost impenetrable barrier. For eight months the Germans had labored to link up every natural and artificial defense in the district to form a barricade to the plains of Douai and its vital communications by road and rail, at which the French were aiming. Trenched ridges, hills, quarries, steel-clad forts hidden in the face of cliffs, tunnels for communication, concrete defenses, catacombs dug deeply in chalk with only embrasures for guns opening on the face of the ridges, machine guns and batteries hidden for cross-fire at every possible angle, and miles of barbed wire, created the tangled Gibraltar of the western front. Between Vermelles and Arras a blunt salient pointed west, its edges embracing the heights of Lorette, Ablain, Carency, and La Targette, across the terrible Labyrinth to Arras, with the *massif*, Vimy Ridge, as a backbone.

Only a sanguinary *guerre de forteresse* could hope to succeed. General d'Urbal succeeded Maud'huy in command. Terrible and futile fighting had oc-

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curred at various points. In May a new plan was tried under the personal supervision of Foch. After sunset on May 8 guns were concentrated round the curved nose of the salient which bulged across the Bethune road, and at daybreak on Sunday the 9th, unusually sultry, a heavy bombardment burst on the chosen front. But the Bavarians were alert, having noticed that wire had been removed from gaps in the French positions.

For three hours the French guns continued, notably before Ablain and Carency, which received 20,000 shells before 8 A. M., when huge mines were exploded at two points and selected battalions from the Twenty-first and Thirty-third Corps broke through the German line, while the Ninth Corps launched a covering attack farther north before Loos.

General Foch had now trained his armies to new, scientific offensive tactics. The Germans rapidly concentrated on their main position, before Souchez, but the French broke through midway between the strongest advanced positions at Ablain and Carency, and moved north and south behind them, practically isolating these strongholds. The attack was perfectly planned. Before the first phase could be dealt with, fresh mines were exploded toward La Targette and Ecurie, and again the French broke through, enfilading and rolling up the first lines farther south. The Landwehr from the lower Rhine, re-

enforced by Bavarian cavalry (dismounted), were unable to check the French onslaught. The attack here was led by the Second Regiment, First Foreign Legion, under Lieutenant-Colonel Cot, with a company of Americans fighting for France. The first battalion was terribly mauled getting through the wire, but the three remaining battalions captured La Targette, and, joining the Turcos, swept on through Neuville St. Vaast, where every house was fortified. In these operations the Legionnaires lost 2,000 men, including many Americans. Carency and Ablain were now isolated except for communicating tunnels, and in the rear the Zouaves, raked by two fires, moved to the north and gained a footing in the end of the trenches at the foot of the Lorette heights. The Germans fought desperately but could not eject the French from their communication trenches.

Artillery could not reach the deep recesses of the machine guns in the quarries of Carency, and for three days the French had to advance yard by yard, bombing their way along the German communicating trenches. On the afternoon of the 12th the Zouaves charged across an open field, tore down the barbed wire and reached a deep cutting and tunnel leading to Lorette. At sunset a white flag was raised over Carency, and a thousand troops surrendered. But 1,200 French bodies were tangled in the wire which was torn down by hand in the last advance.

The French maintained steady progress. The

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Crown Prince of Bavaria had flung forward every spare man in the district, but Carency, Neuville, the historic heights of Lorette, and afterward Ablain, became solid rewards for Foch's new tactics of advancing by the German communicating trenches after the troops had broken through the outer tangle of positions and hills that constituted the advanced line.

Until June 12 the operations were continued, the Baden regiments holding on stubbornly, the French sapping, mining and bombing their way forward through the intrenchments toward Souchez. From the 12th to the 16th the French carried on a desperate offensive in which the African divisions and the Foreign Legion again played a part. The fortified sugar refinery was taken in a furious rough and tumble fight, and the railroad station was surprised, captured, and held against violent counter attacks. But here the French were pinned down for three months before the final capture of the fortified town and cemetery held by the Iron Corps of Brandenburg to lines enfiladed by heavy artillery on the heights of Angres. In the Labyrinth, however, steady progress was made by patient tactics, for several hundred yards.

South of Arras other successes were planned and directed by General Pétain. Colonel of the Thirty-third Infantry, then a brigadier under Maud'huy, he was promoted Joffre-fashion, for his ability, to a

corps commander and finally attained the supreme command. Pétain is of the infantry, a superb athlete, cool in danger and tested as a leader of men in battles where he went ahead of his men and personally directed the fighting. De Castelnau now directed all operations from Noyon to Verdun, and Pétain took over his army.

He took a mixed force from Amiens and struck a surprise blow south of Arras in June to relieve pressure. Bretons, a battalion of Alpines, and middle-aged Reservists from the historic Vendée, without strong backing of artillery, moved unseen into the outer trenches between Serre and Hebuterne. Covered by the mist of dawn on June 7, they rushed the trenches held by the Seventeenth Baden Infantry on a crescent-shaped front of a mile. The first men to get through occupied the communicating trenches that supplied the salient, cutting off retreat and support. All the defenders of the first line were killed or captured. In the center the attacking battalions gained three-quarters of a mile of ground and three lines of main trenches. Though forces were rushed up from the Albert sectors, and the Ninety-ninth Infantry were sent south from Arras in motor trucks, the French dug in and joined the ends of their new front with the original line. Pétain had no reserves to spare to follow up the success, but it drew big enemy forces from the Arras front.

As the French ambulance service was overtaxed,



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the wounded on the new field would have fared badly but for the providential arrival in Amiens of an American Ambulance train under Richard Norton. For four days and three nights these splendid volunteers worked under fire with little sleep or rest. Farther north also various detachments from Paris did splendid work, and any car bearing the words "*Ambulance de l'Hôpital Américain*" was cheered by villagers and soldiers.

The British right, which had been steadily nibbling its way toward Lille, north of La Bassée, supported the French attack above Arras by continued pressure. On May 9 a drive was suddenly made against the Bavarian trenches on the Aubers-Fromelles sector. After exploding two mines, part of the Fourth Corps attacked. They broke through on a narrow front above Fromelles, swept over the reserve trenches, and fought and defeated the supports in the open ground. But this gap was narrow, and by a natural impulse the troops poured through and rushed forward, making the fire of the British batteries as they swept on in open order. Before forces could be organized to enfilade the exposed ends of the German trenches to widen and secure the opening, a party of Bavarian pioneers threw up a barricade of sand bags in the main trench, and machine guns were installed which swept the flanks of the gap. In vain the British tried to silence the fire with hand grenades. In the confusion fresh Ger-

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man reënforcements with sand bags and machine guns were pushed along the other trenches and the breach through which the British had poured was swept on both sides with rapid fire. The gap was soon closed up solidly with two British battalions well inside, cheering as they drove the Germans from a farm. Expecting reënforcements to follow, some companies started up a road to Lille.

German guns now opened on them at close range. Their advance still curtailed their own artillery, but they secured what cover they could and fought against superior numbers until their ammunition gave out. Then they made a desperate effort to fight their way back with the bayonet, but found that they were relentlessly surrounded and that no quarter would be given. A terrible scene was enacted as the trapped men turned at bay and fought desperately.

After dark the Bavarians used their knives, in a hideous frenzy. Wounded had their throats slit. A group stalked scattered survivors hiding in shell holes or other cover. Their leader went in advance, asking in a low voice, in perfect English, "Is that you, Alfred? Where are you?" When men replied, the Bavarians crept among the unsuspecting British and used their knives. "Is that you, Alfred?" became a joke on the German front in Artois, and by that ruse scores of soldiers were murdered. ~~Some~~ who surrendered had their brains dashed out

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with rifle butts. When the ferocity died down, out of 1,800 men 140 were picked up next day, nearly all seriously wounded. Read German diaries afterward captured, describing this slaughter. Add the evidence of the official report which boasts of burying the bodies of 143 English officers and over 1,500 men, of capturing 140 prisoners and 7 machine guns. The Crown Prince of Bavaria knows the details of this shambles. He knows also that some of his surgeons protested.

Day after day the British continued the pressure by holding attacks along their front, and, as reinforcements had arrived, they took over the positions held by the French in Belgium, toward Boesinghe, and extended their right from Vermelles south below Grenay, enabling the Tenth French Army under d'Urbal to concentrate its forces for the important Souchez front.

July, August and September passed with steady preparation for a great offensive which took place at daybreak September 25, aiming to break the lines below Lille and on the Champagne front simultaneously. For weeks ammunition was gathered at all depots, and early in September a steady stream poured up to the British and French batteries on all fronts in general, and between Rheims and the Argonne and between Arras and Belgium in particular. A bombardment then gave the German lines no respite for twenty-four days and nights. Six months

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before, the Germans were able to expend ten heavy shells to one round of a British field gun. But in this phase adequate explosive shells poured from the Allies without a halt.

On September 24 Vice-Admiral Bacon with a squadron made a feint on the Belgian coast. Right across Belgium and France threats of attack were made, which kept German forces busy all night, and early next day. After dark thousands of troops moved to the front between La Bassée to the Labyrinth, and across Champagne—ready for assault on both sides of the great rectangle pushed into France, where success would jeopardize the maintenance of the entire front.

In North France all watches were synchronized by field telephone at 1:00 A. M. on the 25th, while battery commanders reviewed their instructions, and the supply of shells was checked up. At 4:25 a great cannonade roared on the selected fronts, rousing people and shaking windows forty miles away. For half an hour the appalling deluge of shells searched out every yard of ground within range.

Above Arras, the British, between La Bassée and Grenay, and the French from Carency and the Labyrinth, made simultaneous drives aiming above and below Lens junction. From the British lines a new and merciful stupefying gas was tried, more merciful but effective in reprisal, which missed the

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main part of the German line and drifted back.

At 6:30 A. M., with two corps, the British stormed the opposing trenches on a five-mile front, north and south of Vermelles. The crumbling advanced lines were all rapidly taken. But forces operating on the left (Ninth Division) were checked by two strong redoubts. In the center, also, fortified slag heaps in the coal district had to be stormed by the First Division. The French on the extreme right succeeded in breaking through only after considerable delay.

But on wide sections the British swept over every obstacle, and were soon a mile and a half beyond the serried first lines. Here they surprised and stormed strongholds on the second line. Some units swept a mile beyond this, ironically singing a free translation of the "Hymn of Hate," ending with a stentorian "Whom do we hate? England?" But after these successes there arose the complicated tactical situations which seriously reduce the chances for a decisive victory under modern conditions.

Adequate forces must build defensive walls on both sides of the new path of advance, to enable reserves and artillery, with flanks and communications secure, to push forward the invasion of the occupied territory, and carry on effective warfare inside the lines. Speed is essential to snatch a victory before the enemy can gather reinforcements. At the gap

forces must also enfilade and roll up the first trenches from the broken ends to widen effectively the entrance.

The Seventh Division had soon advanced two miles, capturing Hulluch and scores of mining pits and slag heaps defended by a surprised and temporarily demoralized enemy. But its flanks were exposed.

South of Vermelles when the First Division was checked, the Fifteenth Division broke through below it, stormed strong positions before Grenay, and went cheering into Loos, where severe fighting took place in the streets and houses. Several companies went on a mile beyond, capturing Hill 70. The Forty-seventh Division (London Volunteers) on the far right also broke through, and built up a protective barrier from Grenay through Loos, where the advanced brigade stormed and captured the cemetery held by machine-gun detachments. But as the French attack farther south was developing slowly, the path of the British advance was soon being assailed on that flank.

The first attack had succeeded so rapidly that a vital victory, with the strategic prize of Lens itself, was within sight. But the first phase was too quick for the development of the second. Earlier rain, and ground cut up by trenches and shells, made artillery advance difficult; time was consumed in checking opposition on the flanks and center and heavy

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shelling from the north caused delay on the communications. At 9:30 troops, scattered and victorious on the advanced front, were eagerly waiting for orders and reënforcements to push on again against the reserve positions and capture the city. Men sat and smoked in the open, and Tommy Atkins fired at the heavy batteries unsupported on the hills, rounded up fugitives, and prayed for the guns and men necessary to push on to Lens while the chance was his. Some companies reached and for a time held part of its suburb, the Cité St. Auguste, where they chased and overturned trucks loaded with bombs for Hulluch, and encountered little opposition until attacked and practically exterminated by armored cars as they waited for reënforcements.

When effective support reached the new front, German troops and artillery were pouring through Lens, and motor lorries from Lille brought down machine guns and men. The British could go no farther and were forced to consolidate their gains. By night furious counter attacks were made on all sides of the rectangular salient which had broken the first and second German line and reached part of the third system of defenses.

The inhabitants of Loos were free after a year of German occupation. But sharpshooters still lurked in many attics and picked off the officers undetected. Emilienne Moreau, a young school teacher, attacked by a party that was shooting at the

British wounded from her twice looted home, seized a revolver and killed three Germans. She has been decorated by both the French and British.

The French operations on the right met with a strenuous resistance from the outset. Mines were exploded before Souchez and at certain sections the French broke through and captured the first trenches. But artillery on the heights of Angres enfiladed the advance and for some hours the French were pinned to the first line. Three weeks' pounding had not affected communicating tunnels, and a single machine gun detachment inflicted serious losses on the entire army, especially the divisions encompassing the Souchez wood, which were soon facing strong reënforcements. The cemetery was captured by direct assault.

In perfect order the advanced battalions were withdrawn to enable the French batteries to sweep the woods. On the 26th the French advanced again, storming *fortins* with low revolving turrets, cleverly screened on the ridges. A terrible hand-to-hand struggle took place in the Fond de Buval. When the French had gained the ascendancy and were removing wounded and prisoners, German machine guns swept the ravine, killing friend and foe indiscriminately in the desperate effort to stem the tide.

The Prussian Guards had been rushed from Russia to meet the threatened offensive. Several companies held the Château of Carleul until it was bat-



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tered to pieces, and gradually the crumbled stones that marked the remains of Souchez were invested on three sides and taken, while in the woods 1,500 prisoners were rounded up. On the third day the Zouaves stormed trenches on the Arras-Lille road, which was finally uncovered, while another desperate assault captured the ridge of Ecurie. In the Labyrinth also the French gained the last mass of tangled defenses and were able to straighten their new front and hold it in the face of furious counter attacks.

Thus the Artois offensive had reached its limit with Lens menaced and with Vimy and other strongholds yet to be stormed before the barrier to the Douai plains was broken. Attacks were delivered everywhere by the Germans with little success except on Hill 70, where the defenders were isolated by artillery fire, swept by machine guns, and expelled. On the 27th the British Guard Division was sent up. They retook Hill 70 and occupied the crest, though they were unable to reach redoubts on the eastern spur.

In the Loos operations the British lost 2,378 officers and 57,288 men. Major General Capper, who led the Seventh Division in its fight across Belgium, General Thesiger and General Wing were killed. And 3,000 German prisoners, 5 batteries and 40 machine guns were captured. Wireless from Berlin stated that the total German losses "at Loos" were less than 700, which evidently referred to the bat-

talion holding the town itself, a concrete example of their official juggling. The French losses on the right were also heavy.

During this thrust for Lens, which had fallen short of sanguine expectations, a greater assault was made by De Castelnau with the augmented Fourth and Second Armies on the formidable tangle of field fortifications traced across the Champagne chalk hills between Auberive and Ville sur Tourbe on the front controlled by General von Einem.

While the guns had thundered for three weeks on the entire front, special preparations were carried out in Champagne, while every available aëroplane was used to keep away inquisitive fliers. An enormous concentration of men and supplies was effected at Chalons. Miles of screened artillery positions were created; saps were pushed up by night toward vulnerable points, and advance trenches excavated from which the attack could be launched and the reserves deployed for support. The German staff was partly misled by the British pressure in Flanders and the threatened front was not strongly re-enforced.

By night new batteries were concentrated on every sector until September 22, when an unprecedented fire was opened on the German lines, a fury which shattered organized defense. Fresh enemy troops and guns were then sent down from Craonne, but they were gathered north of Chalons, where the

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French reserves were waiting to march eastward for the final hour.

At sunrise on the 25th, the guns ceased suddenly. Every range was checked, every watch set by wireless. Across Champagne every branch of the service had moved into place—five separate battering rams to push forward simultaneously, each instructed in detail regarding the work to be done in their immediate sectors. A signal sent every gun crashing against the main points of attack for three hours, while the infantry waited.

At eight o'clock von Fleck, commanding the center, grew alarmed at the fury and made a personal report to the *Hauptquartier*—the great war brain near Sedan which ruled every part of the concentric front. The great General Staff had also heard that the British were attacking in the north; the Crown Prince reported that activity across the Argonne was holding all units of the Fifth Army; pressure, too, was reported from the Somme, and on the Aisne. Von Fleck must await developments. The "*Armee-gruppe*" on his left was also stunned by the intensity of the French artillery. But the Germans were able to put in five thousand men per mile-section of their serried defenses. They could await attack with complacency.

At 8:30 A. M., a cloud of French *aéroplanes* swept over every section of the Champagne, bombing light railroad junctions, stores, and depots.

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At 9:00, the order flashed along the French line,  
“Prepare yourselves!”

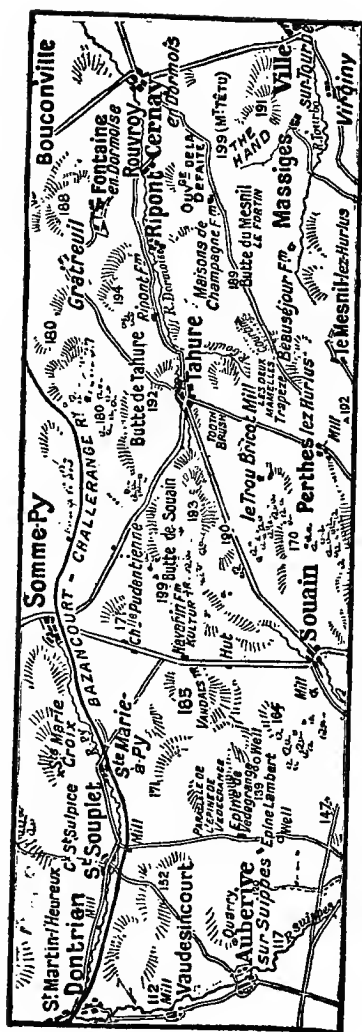
At 9:10, “Stand by!”

At 9:15, “*En avant!*”

The commands were inaudible in the din of battle, but the relief from the tension made the reply of the eager divisions ring above the Vulcan thunder: “*Vaincre ou mourir! En avant!*” as five steel-blue tidal waves of twenty living miles surged forward against the first lines of the Germans.

The chief object of the offensive was to reach the Bézancourt-Challerange railroad, the vital artery of the German front between the Aisne and the Argonne, linked by miles of light railroads which fed the line. The chief objective was the Somme-Py sector. Joffre had learned the bitter cost of narrow wedges, and he had gathered his men, guns, and shells for attack on a wide front so that at the base the breach should be broad, to keep pressure off the immediate flanks if the attack broke completely through. Masses of reserves and cavalry were ready to force their way in the gaps and if possible carry the war beyond the trench lines to open country.

Briefly, the German front ran slightly south from near Rheims along the ugly hog's-back of Moronvilliers eastward to Auberive, across to Ville sur Tourbe. The chalk hills of the Champagne Pouilleuse are ideal for defense. For a year the Germans



MAP. No. 3.—AREA OF THE FRENCH OFFENSIVE IN CHAMPAGNE.

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had labored to make the front impregnable. Seven rows of linked trenches, like a huge gridiron, protected by masses of barbed wire, faced the French. Behind this maze, miles of communicating trenches linked every fortified foothill. Woods, shot down in earlier battles, formed effective abattis tangled throughout with barbed wire. Fire trenches ran at every commanding angle; redoubts with machine guns dominated every approach. A backbone of formidable ridges gave a perfect second line of defense parallel to the vital railroad, and afforded a series of positions from which artillery could dominate every foot of the ground below. These impressive defenses were garrisoned by over 120,000 men when the attack started.

On the extreme left, the reënforced sector of the defense, the French rushed and captured the strong, advanced trenches intact, but were checked by unbroken wire on ground which in peace had fringed their great maneuvers. They were soon pinned down by machine guns, and with their own first trenches ranged to a foot, German artillery on the Moronvilliers plateau pounded the captured positions, inflicting heavy loss on the French and their own men who had been captured. Here the attackers at first could only hold on grimly while the assault developed on their right.

Before Souain, a trident of clever saps in the salient enabled the assault to be delivered rapidly

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at three vulnerable points between the ridges, each of which cleanly pierced the German front. The leading units made amazing progress, the supports following practically in column. In an hour, several ugly positions had been cut out on the Somme-Py road by forces which fought their way between, joined hands in the rear, and took the fortifications intact in reverse. By ten o'clock one division was nearly three miles in the German front and had approached the last line defending the railroad. On the right of the entrance, however, the series of natural bastions defied the bombardments and assaults for three days and took heavy toll of supports as they pushed up the salient.

West of this sector, the forces attacking Perthes smashed through without a pause. The French batteries here were able to cover their infantry advance fully; the German batteries were silenced and the resistance of a triangular work full of machine guns was so masked that the troops crossed the trenches on either side and fought their way behind it, taking it with all its defenders. Supports then poured up through the gap, moved east behind other fortifications, and with a cheer flanked and captured three batteries and the camp of the German reserves waiting in dugouts in the Bricot woods. The French artillery limbered up and followed the infantry into practically open country behind the outer German positions.

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Between this gap and the breach forced in above Souain, however, the enemy maintained a rectangular series of defenses, and this flanking fire had to be overcome before the splendid advances could continue to push north to the railroad, the approach to which was then barred only by the strong trench line linking the Buttes de Souain and Tahure. The French staff had done its work perfectly, and in the center a stupendous victory was in sight when night fell. Considering the extent of the gains, the losses of the Colonial forces and the Eleventh Corps engaged here were comparatively light. General Marchand of Fashoda fame, who led the Colonial Division in person, was shot down early in the advance, but before he was carried from the field vital successes had been gained and a decisive victory seemed in sight.

In the adjoining sectors of Mesnil and Beausejour farm the same thing had occurred. From the height of Le Mesnil the attack had swept over the famous and difficult Ravin des Cuisiniers victoriously, only to be enfiladed and checked by a mass of machine guns implanted in a salient of small hills which the artillery had been unable to silence. Yet in the blood-stained and more formidable area of Beausejour the first waves of attack smashed through the dreaded *Le Bastion*, gained the communication trenches, and swept on to surprise and capture the German batteries on the Maisons de Champagne.



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On the extreme right, two battalions led the attack in a dash through the mist from Hill 180 before Massiges across 700 yards of fury, and gained the *boyeaux* leading to the height. After rough and tumble fighting with grenade and bayonet, the survivors reached the crest, where the flag was planted by a St. Cyr cadet celebrating his baptism of fire, with only a colonel and three junior officers left to rally the shattered command and hold out while reserves bombed their way along communicating trenches in this maze of defenses. The reserves and artillery on the flank held up reënforcements tardily sent over by the Crown Prince, which marched with no apparent reason down the Cernay-Ville sur Tourbe road.

It is obvious that the irregularity of the battle front soon made a French curtain fire difficult to maintain. At three points the attack had smashed through the main German positions. Between them, the enemy held two definite sections firmly, menacing the flanks of the advance. A few more hours of daylight or fine weather would have altered history. Above Beausejour the artillery and reserves moved forward across practically open country, prepared to force the fighting across the final heights, only a mile from the railroad. Wireless messages from Laon, too urgent for coding, proved how severely the Germans were menaced. French guns were smashing the light railroad from Ripont, and

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three German batteries thrown forward at this point were captured before the gunners could unlimber.

Reënforcements rushed by motor lorry from Vouzies advanced down the strip below Tahure and moved through the disarranged shell curtain to menace the rear of one advanced brigade, and a fresh battery also worked around the flank and came into action directly behind the French. Light cavalry, champing impatiently in reserve, instantly rode out. Guns greeted them from the flank, and men and horses fell writhing among the astonished reserves holding captured trenches, but two squadrons galloped across country and charged the new arrivals, while even the desperately wounded cheered. The troopers then dismounted and finished the fight on foot, helping to capture the new battery and rounding up a battalion as it was deploying. At the Navarin farm on the Souain road west of Tahure and within range of the railroad below Ripont, the French were firmly established in the afternoon. Heavy artillery could have pierced the lines on the final ridge while the defenders were disorganized. But rain followed the bombardment and made artillery progress difficult, and darkness checked further operations. All night the French rescued their own and thousands of enemy wounded, magnificently aided by American Ambulance units. But the rain increased and the work of bringing up

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the heavier batteries was retarded. At every point now the Germans were strongly reënforced.

At daybreak the struggle was resumed to expel the enemy from the salients maintained in the regained territory. A dozen isolated battles raged for three days. Sapping, mining, direct assault, and isolation broke down most of the resistance. Perhaps the most picturesque of these battles was fought by the Foreign Legion. Depleted by heavy losses in the Argonne and Artois and the transfer of the British and Garibaldian units to their own armies, the rest were consolidated in two regiments as part of the army of Morocco. While the Colonial forces were winning much ground, the Legion formed the reserve and acted on the right flank of the Souain advance, where the Germans firmly maintained their strongholds. For two days the artillery failed to affect these earthworks shaped like a horse-shoe on curving foothills on the Bois Sabot.

Colonel Cot volunteered to take the position by direct assault on the afternoon of the 28th. The moment the Legion broke cover, the German artillery fire opened. The first battalion charged straight for the center of the curve, but the leading companies were checked by wire and annihilated as they tore their way through. The succeeding waves, however, followed, the American contingent being rallied by the Stars and Stripes, which changed hands five times during the advance. The surviv-

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ors of the leading battalion penetrated the curve of the horseshoe and gained shelter in the *trous des marmites* dug by the French bombardment, while the other battalions worked their way around the flanks to the communication trenches.

At a signal, the Legion made the final rush with the bayonet and was victorious after a terrific combat with the garrison, which resisted to the end. Forty per cent. of the Legion were killed or wounded in the fight which cleared the flank when every hour was enabling the Germans to renew their barriers to the north and nullify the early promise of the offensive. Many Americans were killed in the capture of this almost impregnable position—among them, Lieutenant Sweeny, a West Pointer; John Casey, the artist; Dugan, Soubrian, Scanlon, Charles, Dowd, Capdeville, Egan, Zinn, and Nelson. Among the wounded were Dr. Wheeler, the Arctic explorer; Thoran, Trinkhead, Genet, Pavidka, and Musgrave, who received the Croix de Guerre for conspicuous gallantry.

The sequel was interesting. A captured anti-aëroplane gun—now manned by the Legion—shot down an inquisitive aëroplane hovering low for observation, so the German artillery innocently continued their curtain fire before the lost fortification, while the French forces safely within it swarmed unseen and unshelled through the woods in the rear. They captured all lines of communication and

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cleared the region right to the main artillery position on the reverse of the final heights. Incidentally, the Légionnaires captured gas apparatus stamped 1908.

For a decisive success, all advantages must be promptly followed up. With a large section of ground above Souain solidly French, an assault before Vedegrange on September 28 cleared another solid section of the second German line, capturing forty-five guns and the survivors of five battalions. On the main sectors of the assault, the French front was now consolidated before the ridge parallel to the railroad. But while the French slaved with their bogged artillery, miles of new trenches and thousands of reënforcements had strengthened the final German line, and close to their objectives the French advance was held up. The blow had captured 41 square miles of territory, 316 officers, 17,055 unwounded men, and 61 guns, but it just failed to break through.

For a month the French struggled on and finally captured the Tahure heights. General Gouraud had been appointed to command the special army of the Champagne to continue the operations. Two German army corps were brought from Russia, and as winter became severe, the French offensive died down and again the front remained unbroken.

On every sector through the winter Belgians, British and French had held their exposed lines. Day

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by day the signal flashed, R. A. S. (*rien à signaler*), nothing to report. But men in thousands were being blown to pieces in the freezing, water-logged trenches, enduring, facing death in a hundred ways, but grimly holding on. The record of trench raids, local attacks by both sides, and bitter fighting on many sectors during 1915 would fill many volumes.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ATTACK ON VERDUN

THE persistent and heavy casualty lists from the army of the Crown Prince, during his abortive attempts to isolate Verdun, were causing much dissatisfaction in Germany. "What had he accomplished?" The pivot of the war frontier—but no longer the most vital postern between France and Germany—was a difficult point to select for an offensive. But a stupendous blow at Verdun would divert the maximum of French strength from any sectors likely to be chosen by the Allies for a 1916 offensive. The moral effect of success would be great, and though the strategic value was minimized by miles of precautionary field works created by the French to bar the way across west Champagne, the reduction of France's most important fortress would add luster to the Hohenzollern halo.

During January, 1916, continuous fog and sleet spoiled air reconnoissance, but reports poured in to prove increased activity in Belgium, while the major preparations of the Fifth Army before Verdun were completed before the danger was discovered by the French staff. Two weeks before the blow fell some

portents were heeded, but the decisive strength behind the effort was not anticipated. A cloud of new war planes prevented the French fliers from making a careful survey during the few opportunities for visibility, but accurate reports of massed batteries led the French Staff to improve the roads from the south.

Verdun, the picturesque citadel city of the Meuse, gave its name to the great circle of modern forts and outer perimeter of ultra-modern field works, which had hitherto frowned down ideas for direct attack. Its people were still asleep, its garrison watchful, when a sharp staccato of air-craft guns was drowned by a rolling cataclysm of sound that sent people flocking to the street. The staff knew the meaning of the convulsion. Their cars dashed to the main circle of fortified hills where the panorama showed a curving line of eruption as of miniature volcanoes marking the confines of the outer front.

A great air attack was delivered at dawn, in which every type of air craft, from Zeppelins to Fokkers, bombed French bases and communications, damaged bridges, and destroyed observation balloons and aëroplanes. It was the prelude for the concentrated roar of nearly two thousand German guns which opened fire from the Argonne to St. Mihiel. Long-range shells played havoc with the main communications, but the great fury of the bombardment raged



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from batteries massed on a complete arc of twenty-five miles—a titanic maw of artillery, stretching from Melancourt eastward across the Meuse to Etain, its wide-open jaws ready to close upon the Verdun perimeter. In perfect alignment the grip tightened on the outer positions. Fraction by fraction the range was increased as the great curve of destruction contracted slowly on its prey; yard by yard the ground was systematically pulverized as the cascade of shells closed in.

The French artillery had to be distributed on a wide front, against any sector of which the German reserves could be hurled on the crumbling defenses too swiftly to permit effective regrouping of batteries. Toward evening, the wide-flung outworks of Verdun's first lines and their defenders were practically obliterated, and just before dark the expected attack burst on the northern sectors between the Meuse and Ornes. The German masses advanced slowly to occupy and reconstruct the devastated trenches, marching behind the wall of shells which now moved within the outer lines. But some dazed and half-stunned defenders still clung desperately to the churned debris. A few machine guns had survived the fury of the shelling, and an incredibly deliberate fire checked the complacency of the German advance and reaped some toll before the enemy fixed bayonets and ended the amazing defense of men who knew that they could not be reënforced through

the shell curtain but who refused to surrender.

At Hertebois, the pitiful remnants of a regiment were rallied. Dragging out machine guns that had been hidden in a shattered wood, they fought back so desperately that the German attack broke, reformed twice, again to be repulsed, and actually withdrew after dark to enable their guns to recommence. At the Bois des Caures, in the center, the survivors of the famous Chasseurs from Nancy resisted from shell holes through the entire night, and fought back successive assaults. Farther west, at Haumont, other decimated companies, driven from their first trenches, fought from the concrete redoubt and the broken houses of the village. At first pushed back slowly, they were miraculously stiffened by gunners who crept on hands and knees through the barrage, retrieved a third of the silenced and partly buried field guns, and brought them into action at point-blank range.

Next day, the crescent of German shells which was triumphantly contracting on the main positions was obliged to expand to the outer works, thus affording the main garrison further time to reorganize, while the front line of heroes again bore the brunt. These amazing forces were further reduced during the second day, but continued their resistance until the end, which approached in the late afternoon. Outnumbered twenty to one, the garrison of Haumont was gassed, tortured by *Flammenwerfer*,

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and the pitiful remnants were finally bayoneted amid the ruins of the houses in which they had made their Spartan defense. Their annihilation isolated Brabant on the river, and exposed the flank at Caures. Here Colonel Driant, son-in-law of Boulanger and Deputy for the Department, again and again rallied his men in the final defense on the front and the left flank.

When his command was practically enveloped, with the last machine gun he and a sergeant held a narrow gap down which the survivors withdrew, a handful passing safely through the barrage. Erect and dauntless, the Colonel stood alone, facing the approaching horde, until pierced by the bayonets of the enraged enemy. A more chivalrous foe might have spared a hero whose courage has not been surpassed in history.

At Hertebois, on the right, helped by a new field battery, the defense was maintained until annihilation at four o'clock on the 23rd. The relentless jaw of shells now again closed in, but the matchless heroes of Verdun had held the line with their bodies for thirty-six hours—at Hertebois for fifty-seven hours—thus gaining the respite that saved the fortress.

The defense of pitiful hundreds against a reënforced army had localized the sectors chosen for the main assault, and had thus enabled the surprised higher command to organize for defense, and bring

up shells, supplies, and reserves before the massed guns again closed on the second line. Fresh troops and guns were soon concentrated on the main strong line below the gap—the defenses before Douaumont west across the Côte du Poivre—while reënforcements which reached the intermediate front—Ornes to Samogneau—fought from woods and shell holes to delay the advance. Their left wing was soon shattered, then the right, so that Ornes was lost. The center was then enveloped and smashed. Here prisoners were spared and some quarter was given.

The Germans were now holding a black gap of destruction stretching across from Brabant to Ornes, four miles deep.

General Herr had rallied the Verdun garrison magnificently, but he had few reserves and could get no help from General Roques, who was facing heavy pressure on the east front, or from General Humbert, heavily engaged on the famous line west of the Meuse, which for seventeen months had foiled the efforts of the Crown Prince. But he grouped new guns to strengthen the position—batteries on the threatened sectors and this artillery pounded the captured lines and inflicted severe losses on the storming elements of the thirteen new divisions which von Haeseler, “the Devil of Metz,” had grouped for the general assault.

The St. Mihiel salient had long curtailed direct communications south from the fortress. The main

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railroad was available only to Bar le Duc, thirty-five miles southwest of Verdun. The line and road from St. Menehould, approaching from the west, were now dominated by heavy howitzers. Road transport was the only solution. Ten thousand skilled men were placed on the roads from Bar le Duc. Requisitioned by telephone, every available motor lorry on the Champagne front was loaded with men and supplies and rushed up to the garrison. On the second day, 4,000 motor vehicles were organized and working on the lines of communication in defined relays at nine and a half miles per hour, from rail-head to the fortress. At fixed intervals gangs dashed out, filled in ruts and maintained the surface, and by a clever system of controls the procession never halted. The national highway was reserved for loaded cars going up; the *chemin vicinal* linked minor roads for ambulances and empty lorries to get down. If a car broke down, it was ditched by its successor.

With the upper curve of the Brabant-Ornes perimeter broken in, the French maintained a straight line across the gap four miles north of the fortress. On this narrowed front between Bras and Fort Douaumont, the German guns concentrated their fury until February 26. During one period two thousands shells a minute were thrown on this five-mile strip. It was a flaming inferno.

At 3:00 A. M. on the 25th, when matters were crit-

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ical, General De Castelnau, chief of the General Staff, arrived. The main line from the river to Douaumont was quivering under the deluge. The defenders were dazed, and massed attacks were being repulsed with difficulty. The hours of the stronghold seemed numbered. The city was being heavily bombarded, and General Dubois, the military governor, had arranged for the evacuation of the civil population. But the place was crowded with wounded who were being ruthlessly slaughtered. The American and British ambulances were aiding the French, and working day and night to remove the thousands of disabled to a safe zone. Surgeons, *brancardiers*, and drivers all paid a heavy toll, forty per cent of some units, men and cars, being destroyed on the roads as the guns closed in.

De Castelnau called up General Pétain, who was placed in supreme command of the central armies. He arrived during the afternoon with heavy reënforcements to build up the special Eleventh Army and save the fortress. The defenders of the advanced lines on the eastern outworks of the Woevre were already being drawn back under pressure, to give them a chance to escape should the fortress fall. The Samogneux-Ornes line was battered to pieces, and the first report to the new commander announced the loss that afternoon of the important hill which dominated the center of the main line. It had been captured after seven desperate assaults, and tons of

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projectiles were falling on the ridges upon which rested a section of the main ring of the Verdun forts.

But the famous Twentieth Corps under Balfourier, which started off eighteen minutes after orders were received, was now arriving. Next morning, two of its regiments dashed through the German barrage, as the Kaiser joined his son to watch a triumphant assault over the debris where the French lines had once rested. The main blow was delivered on the Douaumont ridge, where parts of the position could be swept from the hill captured the previous day, but the finest troops of France, clinging to shell holes and crumbled redoubts, hurled back the picked storm-masses which surged up the smoking ridges in successive waves.

Early on the 27th, the approaches to Douaumont were again attacked by the Brandenburgers, but the Morocco division stood like a wall of steel against the "Ironclads" before the village. The armored fortress crowning the height to the southeast had been dismantled after the lessons of Liège, and its guns were distributed in field fortifications in its rear. It was an important observation post, and rounded off the French line, but it proved a perfect target for the heavy howitzers. Huge gas shells reduced the garrison to nine hundred men, and the machine-gun detachments were finally buried alive in its crushed redoubts.

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All approaches to the fortress were closed by shell fire, and the isolated defenders soon were half suffocated in the underground chambers when the Twenty-fourth Brandenburg Infantry crept up a path through a thicket on the farther side, and entered by a broken embrasure near the northeast gate. Many of the garrison were bayoneted; the rest surrendered.

The prize, heralded around the world, proved an empty shell. Except for the disappearing guns retained in the turrets, now utterly demolished, the real artillery of Douaumont, in reserve field works, was soon cutting off all support from its captors. The fort became an island in a sea of French and German shell-burst. The Brandenburgers received food and water only at night, delivered by men who crept down along the shell-swept path. And the French held the small western redoubt on the flank of their lines of trenches defending the village.

Douaumont village was attacked persistently from February 27 to March 4. Again and again every man of the Twentieth Corps re-earned the immortal *Fourragère* which had already been won in Artois and Champagne. Hour by hour the trenches crumbled; each bombardment was punctuated by massed attacks, but the defenders hung on. "Our regiments will die but will not give a yard without orders," was the command and motto.

Wearied by the failure of the costly frontal at-



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tacks, the Germans now reached for the flank west of the Meuse. Obviously, from the ground gained on the east bank, the original French lines west from the river could be enfiladed. After seven massed attacks, the advanced trenches of the line running from the Meuse west to Champagne were a shambles, and the right wing of the Third French Army withdrew to its main positions, conforming with the front north of Verdun across the Hautes de Meuse—the high rocky defile through which the river curves its way northward.

The French were now consolidated on ridges only five miles from the key positions on the communications from the Argonne to Verdun. Picked regiments held the heights of Mort Homme for thirty-three days of furious assault, with only one pause. As the front was partially protected by a curve in the river, massed attacks were also delivered farther west on Haucourt Hill, in an effort to gain the rear of the "Dead-Man" positions. Thousands of troops were slaughtered on both sides, but the Germans gained only a trench element and 600 prisoners. The pressure on the main sectors north of Verdun was also continued, and the fury of the assault developed farther eastward, with a special effort to envelop the fortress and village of Vaux, which at first failed.

With its curve flattened and its grip widened, and with added weight on its claws, the relentless arc of

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artillery was closing in on both sides, while masses of troops <sup>1</sup> tried to force weak points developed by the guns.

On March 4, the battle approached the climax of its intensity. The enemy first pushed in on both sides of Douaumont, enveloping the village. Losing heavily, the garrison cut its way out. Three companies attempting to harry this retirement were counter attacked, but the hand-to-hand fight was ended by a deluge of shells from German batteries which impartially tore up friend and foe as the French dug in south of the breach.

The claw that was reaching west of the Meuse made constant progress over the defenses toward Melancourt, but the tactics of envelopment failed on account of the stubborn resistance maintained by the French, curved around the Mort Homme and west on Hill 304 above Avoucourt. On March 12, the weight of four German divisions on a three-mile front finally pushed men over a trail of corpses up two ravines from Forges and farther west, penetrating the French lines at both points and gaining

<sup>1</sup> During the first part of March the Germans used the Sixteenth Corps, the Sixth and Tenth Reserve Corps, and special divisions on the sectors west of the Meuse. The Seventh Reserve, the Eighteenth and Third Corps, and finally the Fifth Reserve Corps were employed on the center directly above Verdun. Part of the Fifteenth, the Fifth Corps, and the Third Bavarian Corps attacked the French right, the Bavarians operating below Les Eparges in conjunction with the special forces of von Stranz from St. Mihiel.

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the front trenches between them. But every effort of the assailants to join forces in the rear in order to cut out the high ground between them, or to work along the rear of the Mort Homme, failed.

On the 16th, a third wedge was driven in farther west, but again the point was blunted and checked, and these salients restricted the target for the German batteries.

Sheer weight on the last wedge, sustained for two weeks, spread its area, and the front before Melancourt was evacuated late on March 31. An airman by moonlight saw scores of batteries closing over to follow up this advantage, so before daylight the French troops were moved silently back to strong reserve positions on the south bank of the small Forges River. It was on April 1, rather significantly, that the Crown Prince delivered his "surprise" which was to break and turn the stubborn line to the Meuse in order to outflank Verdun. Thousands of shells blasted the empty French trenches—the troops silent and unscathed across the Forges. Then five massed lines moved to the attack. Not a shot was fired until the Germans were well over the crest of the evacuated position. Then the untouched French unmasked a murderous fire, throwing the enemy into confusion. They bravely tried to cling to shell craters, but were too exposed, and finally fled, batteries above Béthincourt tearing

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their flank. Two thousand dead marked this attempt.

The center above Verdun, further flattened by a week of desperate assaults, was still unbroken, and for seven days picked storm-troops under von Cornitz littered the ground east of Douaumont with thousands of dead, in a fruitless effort to break in around Vaux. When they paused from exhaustion, a counter attack drove them from part of the Caillette wood. On April 3 a desperate battle with entirely fresh German divisions raged on a front of thirty-three miles. On the eastern sectors, the claw made a definite advance below Vaux. One force broke in on the reorganized line between Vaux and Douaumont and created a dangerous situation until the marvelous 75 guns closed in and, regardless of losses, delivered a hurricane of fire at close range. Then a famous infantry regiment, trained by Foch, swept up with the bayonet and ejected the Germans, firing not a single shot in the operation.

Fighting ebbed and flowed, tons of steel raining on the French, until April 20 when, after a quieter night, drum fire burst on the entire front at daylight, and the afternoon saw waves of gray again breaking at every vulnerable point on the left center and right. The high tide of the battle was outlined by mounds of corpses and by a dozen minor salients held by utterly exhausted German troops, and night was marked by comparative silence, both sides being in-

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capable of further effort. But as reveille sounded, Pétain gave the signal, and impetuous French reserves sprang forward in a restrained counter-offensive which ejected the enemy from seven salients, and on the entire front the line was straightened.

On April 29 three simultaneous assaults on all sectors were repulsed. Further attacks were attempted, but even supermen have a limit, and the German masses now broke and recoiled at the first burst of French fire. On April 30 aviators reported that many German batteries were "retiring." The battle, continuous for more than nine weeks, was lapsing sullenly, and despite awful losses the French front and spirit remained unbroken. At night now star shells revealed only gruesome fatigue parties collecting the German dead who littered the landscape like the gray rocks of the Brittany coast.

The German casualty lists were appalling. With what Napier called the "mechanical courage of close-order discipline" perfectly developed, masses of troops again and again had swept at practically impregnable French positions. The dead were piled in thousands. Sanguinary combats had raged on the steep defiles along the Meuse. Miles lower down, during the height of this fighting, the writer saw the river thickly polluted with the gruesome debris of these battles, especially after the Germans launched mines to drift against the French barriers,

or when concentrated fire smashed loaded pontoons in costly attempts to turn flanks on the banks.

It often took all night to collect the thousands of German dead. For sanitary reasons, few could object to the cremation of the fallen; but the mind revolts at the system which gathers the gallant dead like carrion, strips off the uniform, and wires the stark forms in bundles which are stacked in the district *Leichen Halle* and transported by periodic trains to the furnaces of the different army groups. Words fail in dealing with the direct evidence of foul materialism which used its science to extract by-products from the bodies of its heroes, and which changed its kilns for incineration into "corpse utilization" factories, where bone and fat were separated and reduced to economic terms to maintain the *Kultur* which claims "*Gott mit uns*" and inscribes "*Deutsche Treue*" on the escutcheon of *Mittel-europa*. This horror, reported first from the Verdun front, was confirmed by a captured order to the Sixth Army on the Somme front.

The British army was now taking over the lines in Artois and Picardy, releasing French forces to repair the Verdun losses. Having underestimated the British efforts, the German Staff now found that a formidable menace was growing on their western center. At all costs, therefore, it seemed necessary to smash Verdun in order to establish direct communications from Metz and dominate the Meuse-

Armee - Tages - Befehl vom 21. 12. 1916.

- b) Einlieferung in die Kadaververwertungsanstalten.  
Es besteht Veranlassung, wiederholt darauf aufmerksam zu machen, daß bei Einlieferung von Kadavern in die Kadaververwertungsanstalten in allen Fällen Ausweise mitzugeben sind, aus denen Truppenteil, Todestag, Krankheit und Angaben über etwaige Seuchen zu ersehen sind

V. S. d. O. K.

J. A.

B r a u n .

REPRODUCTION OF CAPTURED GERMAN ARMY ORDER

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY. ARMY ORDER OF THE DAY DEC. 21, 1916. DELIVERY TO THE ESTABLISHMENTS OF  
CORPSE UTILIZATION.

It is necessary again to call attention to the order that when corpses are delivered to the Establishments of Corpse Utilization details are to be sent as to which troop units they are from, date of death, illness and information if from epidemic.

Moselle watershed before the British could attack.

On May 7, General Pétain was promoted to command the entire southern line, and General Nivelle, the half-English hero of Alsace, leader of the Seventh Corps on the Ourcq, was selected to control the Central armies, with Mangin in local command of Verdun. This day was marked by a new artillery attack, with the greatest weight on the east wing. The artillery retirement reported earlier was for regrouping, and the German assaults were soon falling more fiercely than ever. Their weight finally told. The line crept in well below Vaux; the grip on Fort Douaumont was firmly reestablished on June 1, and at Fort Vaux—held by Major Raynal and the 101st Infantry—over 8,000 howitzer shells crashed in on turret and battlement until only 130 men were left. At night, 260 survivors from the trenches southeast crept into the fort, which next day was surrounded. With this garrison, reduced daily and without water, the Major resisted until the night of the 6th, when he and the survivors crept through the main sewer and escaped.

The eastern claw had now gripped the Souville plateau and pushed in the French right to Fleury and Forts de Souville and Tavannes on the inner line, which barred the railroad from Metz. Tons of steel daily smashed the defenses at Fleury, where for five weeks a persistent but fruitless effort was made to break in and take the forts in the rear. On July



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11, with new Bavarian divisions, eight tremendous assaults were delivered along the entire eastern half of the crescent. The defenders of Fleury were practically obliterated and a gap was forced through the reserve lines.

An engineer commander, leaving Verdun in his car, saw the German flood suddenly pouring down the road that led behind the forts and to the city. Under a hail of shots he went back for machine gun detachments, which checked the rush until reserves arrived.

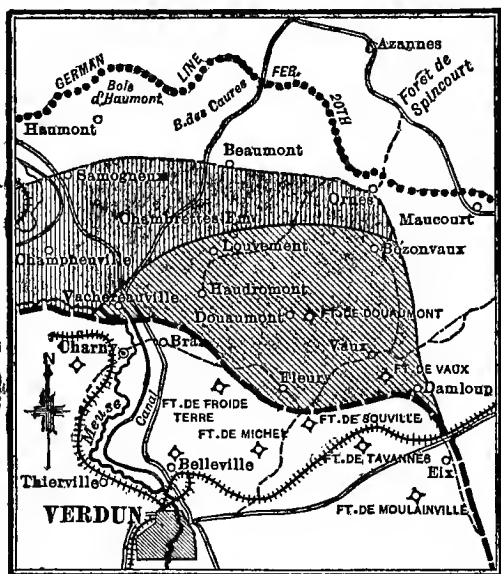
For four days the Germans battled desperately to enlarge their thrust which was reaching the vitals of the fortress called by the Crown Prince "the Heart of France." British victories on the Somme now made the royal general desperate for a decision, and he poured out his men like water until their endurance failed. Yet during these attacks the French sent three divisions to the Somme.

Forces specially selected and directed by General Mangin severely modified the German advance below Fleury on July 15. Frontal attacks, regardless of cost, on the two threatened forts, were also repulsed. The Germans had occupied 120 square miles of territory and had captured over 40,000 prisoners. The French losses were nearly 200,000 men, but the Germans had lost over 500,000.

Mangin now decided upon a surprise stroke against an evidently over-strained enemy. On Au-

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gust 1 the forces of the Crown Prince were attempting to push in well south of Tavannes, when the French suddenly counter attacked toward Fleury and farther north, where they temporarily broke the German center and pushed it back toward Dou-



MAP NO. 4.—GROUND LOST AND GAINED ABOVE VERDUN.

Dotted line shows original German position. Lower line marks limit of their advance.—The shaded portions show the ground retaken in 1916 and 1917 by the French.

aumont. When the first impact was checked, the French dug in and for sixteen days fought on until Fleury was theirs again and the irregular front was straightened on its old intermediate defense line.

The huge drain of shells for the Somme had

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quieted the batteries attacking Verdun, and the increasing success of the British in September drew several German divisions westward. Nivelle and Mangin now prepared another surprise, with three divisions led by De Salines, De Passaga, and De Lardemelle. The troops first went to Chalons to recuperate and rehearse every detail of attack on huge plans marked in replica on the grounds. On October 24 the attack was delivered.

The French had definitely located seventy German batteries on the five-mile front selected. Massed guns suddenly concentrated their fire and crippled this artillery and then blew definite gaps in the German lines. Just before midday, in a dense fog, the French divisions dashed forward, following their carefully rehearsed tactics. On the left, a division aimed due north to gain the Bras-Douaumont road and to swing around with its right on the fort. The next division—the center—aimed between that fortress and Vaux, its wings to spread to the outworks left and right. The third division aimed south of Vaux.

The French had constructed the largest siege howitzer in history, a greater weapon than "*Fleissige Bertha*." As the attacking lines approached their objectives, this dropped its projectiles on the German lines. Four shells hit Fort Vaux and it was temporarily evacuated. Fort Douaumont was soon on fire and filled with fumes. Von Luchow, von

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Luttwitz, and the doughty Reservist, von Zwehl, had been utterly baffled by the scientific tactics of the French. With huge forces they had attempted similar things and failed. *Heerdenmenschen* had lost, and élan and initiative were now to win.

The French drove forward in three protected wedges, joined forces behind their objectives, and thus cut out great sections of the enemy's lines. A huge forceps of men, Colonials on the left, the French divisions in the center, literally clamped out the Douaumont ridge, debouching through ravines and woods on the west and east. On the right, the other division broke through east of Vaux and turned the line there. It was a dramatic coup which had fully succeeded before dark—a trident pushed in to encompass two strongholds.

A battalion of rapid Morocco infantry, "*cheval à pieds*," led by Major Nicols, fought their way to Fort Douaumont. A party of volunteers led by Lieutenant Dumont crept under the wire into the blazing fort. Machine guns were smashed by their hand grenades, and the depleted garrison of dazed Brandenburgers dropped their rifles and surrendered.

Vaux was gripped also, but fought on stubbornly. Next day, the lines west of Douaumont were rolled up from the flank and occupied to within two miles of the Meuse. The French moved their guns up, reënforced their exhausted troops, and exerted

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steady pressure for five days. Then Andlauer's division stormed over the Vaux plateau; Arlabosse's division crept through the Fumin wood, and the enemy fled from Vaux fort.

The tricolor was hoisted on November 2—a dramatic scene—with the French musicians ironically playing the “*Chant de Départ*” amid a cascade of German shells. The ugly defenses of the village were crushed on the 4th. An attack southeast toward the Woevre and west to the Meuse restored to France in two weeks the entire main line—a full negation of Germany's nine months of bloody effort.

The Crown Prince had now to reestablish and hold the outer line of the original perimeter with six divisions, and he held in reserve only five more, “resting” from the Somme. Haig's pressure had told.

Three French divisions of Verdun veterans and a new division went back to Chalons to train for the final coup. Air photographs and maps made reproduction of the front possible. Each unit rehearsed its part, and on December 16 the scientific offensive was launched to final victory—pushing out a six-mile curve over solidly fortified ridges to a depth of two miles. In three days the earlier victory became a triumph.

In the *revanche* at Verdun the French captured 26,668 Germans; 115 guns were taken in three December days. In the area of woods and ridges, Ger-

man authorities estimate that there were expended in shells 1,350,000 tons of steel, sowing an average of 50 tons an acre. No less than 42 divisions had passed through the ordeal of sacrifice to win a halo for their Crown Prince, who was given supreme command of the entire group of armies on the Aisne, of Champagne, and Verdun, while his septuagenarian mentor, his lesser generals, and also von Deimling, were retired in disgrace as scapegoats for the sanguinary failure. In his Verdun command some ex-members of his infamous *Club der Harmlosen* had truly earned their promotion.

On the eve of this victory, General Nivelle was promoted to commander in chief of the French Army in the field; and after the wear of over two years of active service General Joffre, as field marshal, took over the administrative control of the new era of military history opened by the Battle of the Somme.

In June, 1917, the famous Mort Homme, held by dismounted cavalry, and Hill 304 were lost by a sudden German coup. The French answer was complete. Inviting the American officers to witness their triumph and learn actual conditions, the French made an impetuous drive on both sides of the Meuse on August 20, with the troops of Fondclair, Franchette and Martin. Von Dietrich was driven from Mort Homme. The French put their front on the important points of the original line as it stood in 1916, except at Ornes. In the *Légion Etrangère*,

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Americans again fought and died, but inspired by the knowledge that they were no longer individual representatives of their country's conscience, but allies in a common cause. And General Pershing greeted the wounded as they were carried back, proud and content, part of the first regiment to win the Legion of Honor Cross.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SOMME OFFENSIVE

SILENTLY and thoroughly, Greater Britain had been preparing for her part. The Regulars had played the game in the earlier battles; the shattered battalions had been rebuilt with Reservists and Territorials to stem the tide in North France and Belgium. This original army establishment had been obliterated in the glorious shambles of the thin line that was never broken, and a wider Army of the Empire had taken over the immortal trenches marked lightly across the front of blood-soaked mud. An army of 250,000 men was the pledge of the Power whose navy was holding the Seven Seas. Yet at the end of 1915 the casualty lists alone showed 16,471 officers and 528,000 men—two-thirds of whom had fallen on the defensive barrier of dogged pluck—and 4,000,000 volunteers were training in reserve, at a time when service seemed a synonym for extermination, with inadequate forces on the line.

General French being now retired with fame for endurance (Joffre's emotion at the parting is a gauge of his service), Sir Douglas Haig assumed command of the new British Grand Army, and its



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executive head was General Robertson, who had started as a cavalry trooper. The ground work was still tedious. For one item, 3,000 miles of railroad had to be constructed along the front, chiefly on shell-swept ground. In England, the same number of factories had to be established to turn out adequate artillery, machine guns, shells by the millions, cartridges by the billions, and the numerous adjuncts to new trench warfare.

Behind the lines, every month, training camps and "bull pens" were turning out men by the hundred thousand. On the Flanders front, the British line had crept south. Then a complete army took over the French trenches between Hebuterne to the Somme Valley, a section directly supplied from Havre. Next the French Army of Artois was released for Verdun, and the British took over the Arras sections, linking their forces solidly on an exposed line of one hundred intrenched miles.

But the lessons of Lens and Champagne in September had not been lost on the Germans. During the winter and spring of 1916, every yard of defenses was enormously strengthened and backed by strong reserve lines. On the west front, from the sea to the Somme, adequate forces for defense faced the British threat with complacency. His headquarters at Roulers, the Duke of Wurttemberg commanded the line in Belgium, with the Naval Corps on the coast, four Landwehr and Ersatz divi-

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sions facing the Belgian army, and the Twenty-sixth Reserve and Thirteenth Army Corps curved around Ypres to the frontier. Continuing the line,<sup>1</sup> Rupprecht of Bavaria at Lille commanded the Twenty-third Reserve, Nineteenth, Seventh, Second Bavarian, Fourth and Ninth Reserve, First Bavarian, Fourteenth Reserve, and Sixth Army Corps on the front from Belgium to the Somme, with two Guard divisions held for special work.

Rumors of a big British drive had strangled themselves in the long months of nonfulfillment. But it came at last on July 1, 1916, heralded by four weeks of persistent bombardment, and launched on De Castelnau's old front before Amiens, with tortured Albert as the center of the British effort and brilliant French coöperation across the Somme marshes.

Recall the battles of the first autumn, when the Germans attempted to recapture Amiens. The drive from Peronne was halted by the line across the Somme Valley. But as the attack developed, the German Second Army flowed well forward over the high ground above it, sweeping across the serried Thiepval plateau, to be checked and forced to intrench on the southern and western edge. North of the Somme, therefore, the German front described

<sup>1</sup> Under the Hindenburg-Ludendorff régime Prince Rupprecht assumed command of all forces from the coast to Laon, the Crown Prince controlled the southern line, Laon to Verdun, and the Duke of Wurttemberg took charge of the frontier army, Metz to Switzerland.



MARSHALL JOFFRE, SIR DOUGLAS HAIG AND GENERAL FOCH



## THE SOMME OFFENSIVE

a huge crescent of trenches facing almost south before it curved north again and faced due west on the hills along the Ancre, to which De Castelnau had finally pinned von Buelow's army below Arras.

The early war maps made it difficult to follow the British offensive, because they were marked by a straight line from Bray north to Arras—for little has been written about the great flood which the French stopped in Picardy. But it formed a big bulge between the Somme and the Scarpe, over the high ground before Bapaume where successive ridges were ready for each caliber of German artillery, to back a sweeping deployment over the plains below—the drive which would have cut off all the western half of Northern France to the sea had the Germans blundered less, had De Castelnau's forces faltered, or had Joffre been a day late in creating the flanking army at Arras. The German offensive had then become defensive. But for twenty months the serried ridges had gained in strength.

Above the Somme loop, at Frise and Curlu, curve a line on the map toward Hardecourt and due west below Mametz and Fricourt toward Albert. Then curve north around the outskirts of La Boisselle, two and a half miles northwest from Albert, twisting snake-like on the ridges east of and overlooking the Ancre, below Thiepval. Still north, cross the river and trace the line through Serre and Hebuterne through Monchy. Two miles above this, turn the

line directly northeast to Glangy due east of Arras, and you have outlined the great bulge of occupied territory between Peronne and Arras, pushed roughly ten miles due west from Bapaume and twenty-five miles across, from the Somme to the Scarpe.

On this outlined front, the German army groups maintained a front-line system of a maze of trenches from four to ten rows deep, zigzagged across the ridges, the lower ground in front tangled with barbed wire. Behind this, deep concrete fortifications linked the outer villages and held thousands of machine guns which could sweep every approach in assault, but which could rest securely underground during bombardments. Over a hundred Picardy villages were linked in a series of field fortifications which formed three definite systems or lines. In every sector, woods, heavily wired, screened clever artillery positions and were cut up by alleys for machine guns to operate at various angles. The Germans had intrenched to make the front an unassailable part of a permanent frontier.

The Allies had small choice for battery positions. But the British artillery had grown to stupendous power, and the guns were massed closely along every yard of the front, relying for concealment on a flimsy camouflage of branches, on air superiority, and on weight of metal when their power was unmasked. For weeks, tons of British shell shook the German

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lines in France and Belgium. But the chief weight fell on the sectors below the Ancre. With the French operating on both sides of the Somme River, aiming at Peronne, the British planned to crush in round the curve of the bulge on a wide front whence they could drive a wedge toward Bapaume, which would act as a lever at the base and wrench the mass away. With such a gap, further pressure might force a road toward Valenciennes, to modify the entire front in France, and perhaps end static warfare.

By June 30, the German side of the artillery duel had materially weakened; their front trench lines were a mass of débris and torn wire. All night the attacking guns roared without a break. All night, too, columns of British infantry closed in to reënforce the intrenched forces of the Fourth Army under Rawlinson, who commanded the operations; the Seventh, Eighth, Tenth, Third, Fifteenth, and Thirteenth Corps, running from left to right, were massed along the line. Selected divisions were deployed in the advance trenches on a front of twenty miles from Gommecourt north of the Ancre along the western front to La Boisselle and curving along the southern defenses to Maricourt, where the French were consolidating, and where the front faced west again across the Somme Valley southward to Fay. To visualize the scene of this great battle, take the general aspect of Westchester County—its series of hills, woods and valleys. It

was an ironically peaceful setting of farms, of hamlets showing through the trees that hid their partial ruin, and of pasture run to seed, gorgeous in patches of color. But at the foot and sides of the plateau and ridges which stand above the Ancre and curve round to the Somme, pulverized belts of torn earth, stumps and broken masonry marked the work of British guns on the hardly visible lines of defense hidden underground. Once these *arrondissements* were the home of disorder, boycott, and agrarian outrage which Ireland never equaled. But content had been regained in the peaceful valleys until von Buelow's army swept across.

Many villages were only looted, and stood intact in the enemy's lines, masking deep the concrete works in their cellars—fortresses linked in the chains of defenses rising tier on tier on successive ridges to Bapaume. To the south the lazy Somme curled through difficult marshes in the valley across which the French had gathered. Along the Ancre flowers and grass had softened the mine craters prodigal in the district, but British howitzers were now tearing up new excavations.

At night the scene was strange, with miles of gun flash, signal rockets in the German lines, the roar of artillery, and the steady tramp of legions of marching feet as the columns closed in for the attack, singing to their stride, and showing no trace of the ordeal to which they were closing, with its death to



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many thousands. Miles of transports held the roads, and ambulance trains moving up for the morrow's work. The near background showed line on line of guns belching destruction on those silent trenches on the foothills and artillery replying far behind them. So the night passed—a mass of seeming confusion from which the British faculty for order evolved system until all was ready for the signal.

It came at 7:30 A. M., July 1, with a barely perceptible pause in the guns as the range leaped from the smoking first lines to a fire curtain behind them. A huge mine exploded under the bastion of La Boisselle; clouds of black smoke were released on "no man's land" for a screen. And a curving wave of troops twenty-five miles long were over the parapets and charging the German lines.

Yet the churned earth of the enemy front came to life in places—but there was little loss generally as the British tore across the first lap—and then machine guns and rifles burst from reserve trenches, the German guns came into action, and the real battle had started.

The enemy expected attack on the west on a narrower front, and had massed his reserves and guns before Hebuterne, along the rising ground at Serre, Beaumont Hamel and Thiepval. The left wing therefore faced a hurricane of fire, and the lines were torn to pieces as they charged. Supports followed steadily up the slopes and finally took the

first line. By magnificent bravery men of the Seventh Corps went on, swept up to Serre, and some troops swarmed round Thiépval. But the efforts could not be maintained. The Germans everywhere were massed on high ground with a clear field of fire, and wave on wave of British troops was swept away as they strove to reach the dominating positions. Machine guns cut through the ranks like scythes.

On the center La Boisselle, and Fricourt checked any sweeping advance. The ridge, most of the village of La Boisselle, and part of Fricourt were taken during the day; otherwise little progress was made beyond the capture of the first trench lines, thousands of troops being swept away as they strove to reach the main strongholds. But at several points in the center the British had taken deep bites in the German front.

On the right, an advance of nearly one mile was made on a front of seven, the British sweeping over several important defenses, including the fortified villages of Mametz and Montauban, and strongholds in the Bernafay wood.

Little ground was lost at night during fierce counter attacks, however, and at daylight the guns recommenced on the stubborn salients before which the British dead were piled. Fricourt, on the curve, was completely conquered at heavy cost before the second afternoon, and some troops gained a footing in

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the fortified woods above it. But in the environs of La Boisselle and Thiepval desperate assaults were repulsed and a later counter attack gave the enemy Serre again.

From the 2nd to the 7th, minor progress was made by the British, who sustained frightful losses in straightening out their new lines and consolidating positions where they were hanging on doggedly at the edge of formidable field fortifications, bombing their way forward a yard here and there, and everywhere exposed to machine-gun fire. It was the real baptism of fire for most of the battalions, and the men were often too keen to smash forward and win at all costs.

The lessons of the first week on the Somme should be studied in the United States, for the eagerness of American regiments to get to close grips with the enemy will cause many casualties and a waste of precious men unless impetuosity is checked. However, troops will see red at first, and nothing but practical experience can teach the ratio of caution.

On July 1, below Gommecourt, a command of famous London volunteers—the Queen's Westminsters (friendly rivals of the New York Seventh), the London Scottish, the Rifle Brigade, Rangers, and Kensingtons—broke through the first line. They went on through a hail of machine-gun fire and broke through the second line. With magnificent enthusiasm they now followed the fleeing Germans toward

the third line of defenses, and were checked in the outworks, far beyond their objective. By lucky signals they stopped the scheduled bombardment of the British guns which would have cleared the front they were holding. But the troops on each side had not been able to advance so far. Their flanks were exposed and they were too close to the next defenses for artillery to help safely. Ammunition ran low, and the Germans placed a terrific barrage behind them—a veritable portcullis of shells—so they could neither be reënforced nor supplied. A sad few trickled back. Some companies dug in, and for nearly a week made a hopeless defense, suffering terrific losses before the survivors would withdraw. Yet no general could withhold praise. Like good sportsmen, they had attempted the impossible and nearly succeeded. They sacrificed seven-eighths of their strength and never surrendered, giving the answer to the German delusion that citizen soldiers cannot fight.

At times, entire British battalions were shot to pieces as they charged cheering across the open, when they should have fallen flat for two minutes to allow fresh artillery work, and gone on after a burst of firing had sent machine gunners to cover. The casualty lists were heavy before the new troops learned to combine caution with dash. Patient tactics soon won wide success. Points were seized in short rushes, battery work coöperating. Positions

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were often gained by reaching communication trenches and bombing the way until the impregnable frontal positions were cut out and enveloped.

The British army had marched to the Somme full of confidence. Each branch of the service had been trained patiently and thoroughly. At the first signal, every unit went in to win. Men showed bulldog courage; they put forth every ounce of weight they had, to break the German front. A huge machine had been assembled, but time and bitter losses were required before the various parts ran smoothly. Frontal attacks were inevitable; but generally there are weaker lines that can be penetrated by pluck, and utilized for victory with skill and patience. Until the practical Somme course, the general tendency of the British was to advance too far on sections where an initial success was won. Sometimes big results were gained, but keen judgment was necessary. The lesson cost thousands of lives.

Under a barrage the first line goes over with the bayonet as quickly as possible. It is supported with a line of bombers who can sense machine-gun lairs or stubborn nests passed over in the first rush but which may prove fatal for supports. These are bombed out and cleared as the second wave goes across and passes on to rebuild the first line, with its own bombers in support. Special clearing parties now sweep over the captured ground for the carefully concealed traps and tunnel exits which

may soon pour ugly forces in rear. More supports build up the attacking line, and to them falls the important duty of walling in salients and blocking up flank approach. But bitter experience alone can restrain the ardor of men bred with the tradition: "Up, Guards, and at them!"

The advancing front soon becomes irregular. Stubborn obstacles check the advance on definite sections; the tide of men flows forward on either side, and soon there is a dangerous gap or entrance down which the enemy reserves can get on the flanks or rear of the advanced forces. At such points the captured sections of trenches must be walled in and guarded, and the salient reduced or cut off in rear by special tactics. Bombers must always watch the flanks of the advance and wall in the ends of any trench section not definitely cleared. A few sand-bags in the traverse, with bombers and a machine gun enfilading the position, may soon quiet the determination of enemy reserves which in all assaults seek bypaths to get at the rear of the weakened advance lines.

The British lost more than an army corps to learn these lessons in the first Somme period. Pedantry had established defined rules for every emergency, but generals soon learned to discard all peace theories of modern warfare, and after early mistakes they exhibited fertility of resource and brilliance of direction. The troops responded, showing the sen-

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timent of respect and habit of subordination which is discipline, coupled with high qualities of individuality and initiative which wrested success from the solidly trained and always courageous soldiers of Germany.

On the British right, the French also made splendid progress—the Colonial Corps and the famous Twentieth Corps, tipped by the Thirty-ninth or Iron Division. These troops, brought specially from Verdun, had profited by its lessons and its glories. On the three-mile front north of the Somme and to Fay on the south, the first line trenches were rapidly captured. These trained veterans gave a splendid object lesson of the way attacks must be delivered. First, irresistible dash, then solid team work with every branch coördinated. They sensed the possibilities and limitations, always ready to hold back when the guns should pave the way, and to strike without restraint at the crucial moment. In two days they had captured 9,000 prisoners and many guns. Curlu and Frise were taken, and below the Somme the Germans were driven from their second line by a dashing advance under Foch's eye. The troops tore over the front trenches and, while supports dealt with intermediate points of defense, re-enforced lines of assault swept to the artillery positions, taking seven heavy batteries, the field guns escaping by a margin of seconds.

The French attack was partly a surprise. On

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July 1, a sudden air raid shot down fifteen enemy observation balloons, and though the Germans claimed mastery of the air, not a single plane ventured to approach the French lines that day. The artillery, therefore, had things their own way. Five different columns of enemy reënforcements were then reported, caught in the open by the heavy guns, and broken up. Definite periods of silence broken by terrible *rafales* from the *soixante-quinze* guns also greatly disconcerted the Germans, whose communications here were exposed. Magnificent air photography was the base of this battery work, and the enemy's food and ammunition had grown scarce before the attack started. When the French troops went over, they swept all front lines, and the second line for three miles, reaching within four miles of Peronne.

On the difficult British front, for the first few days, forty salients were maintained, like the first grip of teeth in jaws that were starting to close. On the north and south, Thiepval height was guarded by huge redoubts. After all frontal attacks had failed, a sudden reckless dash—contrary to cautious tactics—pushed up from a salient and maintained a wedge across the rear of the Leipzig Redoubt. This enabled troops below to take Orvillers. Along the south front, a score of minor salients were soon reduced. When the big gains here had been consolidated, the artillery closed in, and on July 7 beauti-



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fully planned attacks were delivered on three sides of Contalmaison.

A brigade of the Third Division Prussian Guards had just detrained to strengthen the garrison. Unconscious that a new assault had started, they marched down, singing a chorus which was to prove the *Morgenroth* of many a stalwart soldier, squarely into the zones plotted for the jump of the British bombardment when the infantry attacked. As the British leaped forward they saw that their protective fire was deluging a living target. After a desperate fight, the depleted Guards were rounded up as prisoners, beaten in part by a battalion of North County Bantams, specials of the five-foot class.

By the afternoon of the 10th, Contalmaison, very strongly defended, was walled in on the east and west. A few companies also, skirting the Albert-Bapaume road, had crawled through the woods to the northwest, where they went nearly a mile across the open to reach upper approaches to the village. When this minor force charged down in rear, the already shaken garrison turned and fled to avoid envelopment.

On the curve, the British center had now a definite grip on the second main line, but Mametz Wood on the right was still strongly held. On July 14, France's day, the attack recommenced. The British right stormed Longueval and after 2,500 heavy shells had been dropped into Bazentin le Grand,

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the gain was extended westward and the line joined to the forces in Contalmaison. By night the ugly stronghold of Bazentin le Petit was also pinched out. The great second line was now breached for three miles and hundreds of troops were cut off and captured in the wooded valley in the south.

Thousands of prisoners were taken, but many detachments retired to shell holes in wheat fields and wired thickets in the open country behind, and on these wasp nests the Dragoons and Indian Lancers were loosed. In an old-time cavalry charge the troopers cleared the front and swept across the open until the German artillery caught them. They then sent their horses back and dug in on an advance line which the infantry soon reached in support. That night the Germans withdrew masses of artillery, but threw heavy reënforcements to strengthen their front and join the remaining second line strongholds to the third line on the high ground before Courcellette, Martinpuich, Flers, Lesboeufs, and southeast to Morval and Combles.

The new advance was cutting seriously in rear of the untaken strongholds on the west front. The ridge to Orvilles above the Amiens-Bapaume road was captured from the Prussian Guards on the 17th, and on two sides the British were free to close in on Pozieres. But German reserves were pouring up to save their threatened front, and for four days they

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counter attacked in desperation from behind Thiepval, westward along the line to Delville Wood and around the curve to Guillemont. A week of heavy rain also hampered the British advance and made it difficult to consolidate and supply the new front, and many exhausted divisions were replaced. Rawlinson's forces were closed over to the right and the Second Corps and First Anzac Corps pushed up in the center, tightening the grip around Thiepval and covering the salient behind it across the Albert-Bapaume road and round the lower slopes of the spur dominated by Pozieres.

A *mêlée* of medieval ferocity raged for days in the woods on the right, where thousands fought in the tangle with clubbed rifles, bayonets, and fists. In spite of the mud, the British artillery pushed forward and regrouped in the valley below Pozieres and on the captured ridges farther east. The rains ended on July 22, and the artillery opened a terrific bombardment, new supplies enabling them to expend half a million shells a day in the battle area. At midnight, the bombardment lifted, and a London Territorial and Australian division jumped forward in a surprise attack in the center, which gave them a wide section of the general defense system centered by Pozieres—captured by clever coöperation of the two forces in a desperate battle.

During a week of glorious weather, regardless of losses, new German divisions and batteries were

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flung into the fray. Their impregnable front was in jeopardy. From the sea to Switzerland the Allies exerted a steady pressure; but unfortunately they had no adequate force available for a simultaneous offensive at a distant point in order to divert enemy reserves which were now pouring over from the Russian front to the Somme area. But the Australians twice counter attacked and captured more elements of the Pozieres system. All gains were held stubbornly. No record can be made of the hundred battles that raged along the line and around the right curve to the French toward Hardecourt. In many sections when the German Reserves paused from sheer exhaustion, the British counter attacked and made headway. Delville Wood east of Longueval, packed with dead, proved a debated point and changed hands night and day until July 29, when it was definitely cleared out and held by the South Africans while the Scotch took the high ground on the right above Guillemont.

From these woods west to Pozieres, the captured second line of field works was consolidated, completing a gain of thirty square miles. But the British shells had dug a mass of temporary defenses which the enemy reserves linked and wired by night in the gap for which thousands of British lives had been sacrificed. Instead of a great sweep forward to the third line, progress was therefore slow and costly.

On August 4, in the center, an Australian and a

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South England division before Pozieres, by a surprise assault after sunset, when "retreat" had sounded, took the dominating crest held by the Ninth Reserve Corps. In a sweep nearly two miles wide the unconquered section of the second line where it crossed the backbone of the highest ridge and trenches, right to the spur behind Thiepval, was captured. By moonlight the panting troops looked down at last upon the open country behind, across the third line which rested on the farther edge of the plateau. This vital gain was fruitlessly counter attacked, and a brigade feeling for the left of the advance was shelled to pieces by high-angle fire, proving how surely the grip had tightened behind triumphant Thiepval.

Though rain again turned the churned dust to swamp, the batteries were soon on the ridge for direct fire on the massed German guns before Courcellette and Martinpuich. Generals Fuchs, Marschall, and "Kickback" hurried to Prince Rupprecht; the Headquarters cars tore down to observe and confer; engineers arrived to plan laborious mines under the position; Berlin's *Nachrichtendienst* told the world that the British advance ended in repulse. But men and guns were on the key position of the great stronghold, and the gunners tried to see German time on Bapaume clock tower.

On the right also the menace had grown. The new British front facing north turned at a sharp

angle above Guillemont to join the French army facing east. Heavy assaults were made on both sides of the apex to break this Allied link. Night attacks against the British intrenched in the woods were led by flame throwers, who scorched the faces off the defenders as the "*Stosstruppen*" tried to "push" through. Late in July these attacks culminated in the capture of many scorched and gassed troops who were deliberately left foodless and unattended, suffering horrible agony and exposed to artillery fire for five days before a British counter attack recovered these dying victims and eased their torture with morphine.

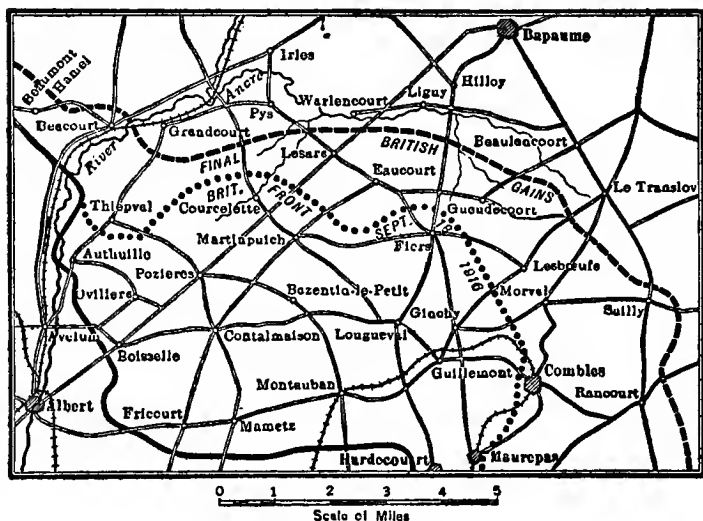
A concerted Anglo-French movement was organized to round out the angle and cut out the strongholds of Combles in the valley to the east and Morval on the ridge to the north, by extending the British line farther east from Longueval through Ginchy, and by pushing the French left forward across the open ground before Maurepas, then extending it north to join the British, thus inclosing the hostile area and its defenders.

Fayolle's army had been making good progress on both sides of the Somme. South of the river, Estrees was captured, and the line was closing in on Biaches, two and a half miles west of Peronne, and approaching Belloy farther south, where Alan Seeger, the Harvard poet, was killed, with other Americans of the Legion. North of the Somme, the French

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had taken Hem and were approaching Clery northwest of Peronne, with their left in touch with the British before Hardecourt.

On July 30, the French line pushed eastward on the entire front. Their left obtained a footing on



MAP NO. 5.—THE SOMME OFFENSIVE.

Black line shows original German front attacked by British, July 1, 1916. Dotted line shows British front, Sept. 18, 1916. Line of dashes marks final British gains and left of French line at Sailly Saillisel.

the ridge outside Maurepas. Coöperating, the British stormed Guillemont, but were checked before Ginchy and fell back with heavy loss. On August 7, Guillemont was again captured and the approaches to Ginchy. The Germans now brought up heavy batteries and fresh divisions. They cut in from the

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Combles road, and flanked and enveloped two British battalions in the village. Forces also reached for the French flank and fought magnificently when caught in a hopeless bombardment.

The Germans attached great importance to the Peronne-Bapaume road; they fought desperately to hold this approach. But on September 3 the British again took Guillemont, buried two thousands of its garrison, and held on while rain, gas shells, and night attacks made life a hell for a week.

Then the peerless Irish Division—Nationalists and Ulster Orangemen—raced for the latent strength of Ginchy, still defiant after six weeks' battle. Its defense had cost the British heavily, but the Irish brigades won the final honors after a desperate rough-and-tumble fight in the cellars and trenches on the top of the main ridge. There was no long wait. The French had been fighting steadily eastward. The First Infantry won the Croix de Guerre by storming Maurepas; the Guillemont road was cleared up and they could now extend their front northward up the valley east of Combles, while Rawlinson's forces fought eastward through Ginchy to the edge of the Morval plateau. Again the French advanced on their entire front, their left approaching Raucourt and capturing Bouchavesne from the Westphalians on the Peronne-Bapaume road.

On September 26, the battle for Combles was started unexpectedly when reserves from Morval at-



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tempted to prevent the English and French lines from finally closing in a rectangle on the heights above the town. Fighting developed in the valleys on both sides of Combles, and just before dark its defenders weakened. A patrol led by Ernest Waldron of Paterson, New Jersey, found a way in. He guided the column to the center of the town. Another party approached with bayonets ready. A challenge broke the tension and French and British clasped hands, having unconsciously effected the angle of envelopment long fought for. Farther north, two English regiments, hearing the rush of the retreating garrison, went over without formation and caught most of them.

But the widening of the angle of the Franco-British *liaison* which had started this joint movement had become secondary during the march of events. South of the Somme, the French had made such amazing progress that General Micheler had brought the Tenth Army to extend the offensive south from Barleux to Chilly. The front south of the river moved eastward in pace with the line to the north until it pushed across the railroad from Peronne to Roye and got near the main road to Roye and Noyon. When the forces fighting on the north bank reached the Bapaume road, they were within range of Mt. St. Quentin, due north of and protecting Peronne, which now became the French objective. On both banks of the river there was terrific fighting.

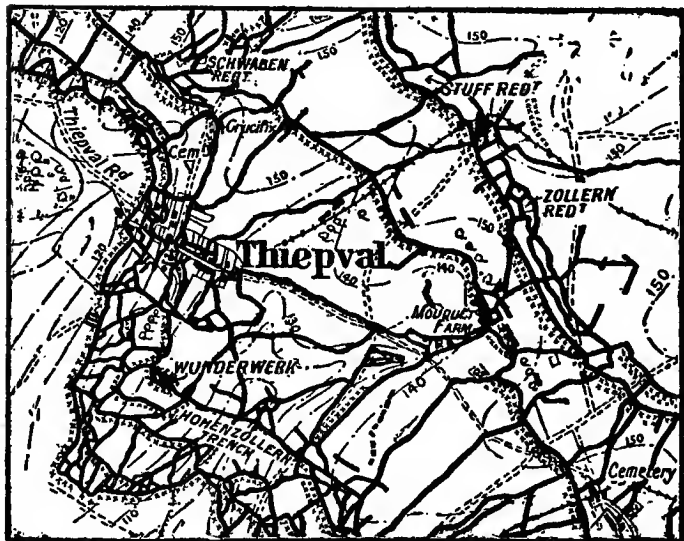
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Haig now lost no time in striking a wide blow to sweep the Germans right off the ridge from behind Thiepval eastward across to Morval on the third line, and capturing the strongholds on lower ground behind it. The guns had not rested since the second line was breached. September 15 gave the triumphant climax to ten weeks of desperate effort.

The men went over the top at 6:30 A. M., a phalanx of six miles against the formidable and greatly strengthened defenses, and losses were heavy. Then, as an experiment, new types of armored cars, or moving *fortins*, the famous tanks, were tested. Four lines of trenches had been stormed, but a fortified sugar factory held up the left below Courcelette. The first tank in action—christened *Crème de Menthe*—now lumbered forward. The steel tortoise crawled to the factory, crushed out the machine guns, and the infantry dashed up and captured the garrison. Other deadly points were rolled out, and the monster, passing over trenches, led the infantry to Courcelette, turned its guns at the cellar defenses, and met and stopped reënforcements hurrying to the village. By 9 P. M. the great stronghold was subdued. Other tanks waddled serenely across the deadly open ground on the plateau at Martinpuich, Daphne, and Delysia, crushed out a row of spouting machine guns as the troops charged across, and before sunset this great tangle of defenses was taken.

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“Vulcan’s Joy Rides” was the slogan. And on the right above Ginchy, the British, after a bitter struggle, swarmed over the ridge to the open, field batteries and cavalry advancing at the gallop toward Guillemont.



MAP NO. 6.—THE TANGLE OF GERMAN DEFENSES SURROUNDING THIEPVAL.

In the center, on the eastern front, only a mass of woods remained untaken. For ten uneventful days fighting raged. Guards met Guards; the tanks crawled out; salients were straightened, while the rains descended, drowning many wounded in the shell holes. Then the line went forward again, another clear sweep that took Guedecourt, Lesboeufs,

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and Morval; and many German guns were moved back while machine guns played at rear guard and balked the expectant British cavalry.

Now Thiépval, the sullen, western sentinel of the plateau, was doomed. Pulverized masonry marked the village, the center of four crossroads. But the gloomy hog's-back, bristled by charred stumps, had resisted all attacks and stood unconquered under hundreds of tons of shells. The height was a rabbit warren, tunneled in all directions and dominating an amazing field of fire. When approached, bristling with guns, it resounded like a huge steel structure clamped by a thousand riveting machines. There was no dashing assault at the last. Its resistance was gradually squeezed out after weeks of costly advance, and its garrison, strong in the belief of their impregnability, fought like cornered rats.

The end came on September 26. The attackers closed in persistently, subduing dugouts with bombs; while machine guns came up like Jacks-in-Boxes, took their toll, and disappeared. There seemed no key to the main underground system until a tank lumbered along half a mile of redoubt and suddenly crashed through the roof of its parallel tunnel. Its crew were killed, but men with bombs poured in the hole. Bullets spouted up the dark corridors, and only the saving quality of mercy spared any of the garrison, as gas fumes and smoke seemed the only remedy when the inmates refused to surrender.

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A second way was found to the underground vaults in which men fought, stabbed, and wrestled in hellish darkness until the garrison was overcome. A thousand men were captured, but some escaped by another tunnel to the Schwaben Redoubt farther north.

There were still great redoubts on the northwest of the ridge, and Beaumont Hamel above it overlooking the bend of the Ancre. But the British had smashed in over the lower curve of the bulge to a depth of six miles on a front of eight—a definite breach of the solidly fortified German front. The winning of the third line was a stupendous achievement, because in two days of frontal attack with perfect coöperation, a position, on which every available gun and man could be crowded, was cleared in its entirety. It cost thousands of lives, but it swept the ridges clear and gave the British dominating artillery positions as they swept on to the open valleys beyond, and it wrote Defeat across the most formidable barrier of defense constructed by Germany to hold the western front—negating twenty months of herculean labor.

But the vision that many had of the rapid advance of a victorious army through the breach to impose a Sedan on the forces of defense, and reestablish strategic initiative in open country, faded as the Germans demonstrated their ability to link up shell craters over night for delaying actions and to dot

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their machine guns over miles of improvised defenses blasted by hostile artillery. Even naval divisions came down to help Rupprecht's forces. But had there been a longer period of fine weather, no hasty system could long have withstood the pressure that had broken through that front.

Early storms of snow and sleet converted the ground into a morass and proved a great relief to the German Staff, while the British toiled to get guns to the crest of the defensive backbone which had cost them nearly 300,000 men. In October, the British captured Beaumont Hamel, a naval division requesting the honor of storming its ravine and trench strongholds on the Ancre. This widened the gap. Picked forces also made a huge sweep and carried the front forward to three miles southwest of Bapaume. Fine weather was needed, however, to maintain a steady advance. The snow caught a huge army camped in the open and delayed the fruits of the enterprise while the troops prepared winter quarters. But Bapaume was doomed.

Winter also deferred the wonderful French advance against the linked defenses of von Ermolli and von Garnier. On October 18, their left wing took the heights of Sailly Saillisel, and made good on the ridges running north from Peronne. South of the Somme, the army had closed within range of its southern approaches, and its right had cut important roads from St. Quentin. By their skillful tactics of

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penetration and envelopment the French made large hauls in guns and prisoners.

During 1916, the total prisoners of the French army were 78,592. They had completely destroyed 416 aëroplanes and forced down 195. The British during the year took 40,578 prisoners. On the Somme, the Allies jointly captured 1,449 officers and 71,532 men; 130 heavy howitzers, 173 guns, 215 mortars, and 987 machine guns, and had engaged 38 German divisions.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HINDENBURG LINE

“CALIGULA!” remarked a tourist. “No, Caliban!” said his friend, commenting on the gross bulk of a man seldom absent from or abstemious at a famous German tavern. The war sent him to Russia where he won a great victory against a line of five men per rifle, and the Hindenburg legend grew through the days the wooden effigy was hammered full of nails for charity. The Somme failure needed changes at the top, radical and popular, so with Ludendorff as brain, Hindenburg, the ruthless, assumed absolute command, upset the Navy to the edge of revolt, organized the full national power for war service and gained a strategic waiting reserve of a million. The Somme threat had to be met. But the tourist was wrong—the beer drinker was Attila, the Hun, a reversion to type. To him age, sex and law of war did not exist—military prisoners and civilians were impressed by thousands and lashed as a great human plow to excavate deep defenses on a new line to modify the front. And on the thousand square miles before it—devastation. “Where my horse passes the grass will never grow!”



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The winter, too, had been busy for the Allies on the old front, with fierce fighting January 11, and on all subsequent fronts by the British, who had started too late in 1916 and now were to finish the task. But their Somme activity masked preparation for as great a blow farther north.

For two weeks, in February, rain, snow, and fog spoiled air visibility, but patrols sensed an increasing nervousness on the German front. Shells of heavy caliber ceased, and on the 25th a raiding party found the trenches beyond Serre unoccupied. On the Ancre front the infantry at once went across the intervening slime, to find that thirty square miles—the angle above Thiepval, pressed from the west and south—had been evacuated.

Feeling attacks on the Somme front encountered heavy machine-gun fire. By the middle of March the ground was passable. The British army closed forward from the west toward Bapaume on the 15th, to meet a nominal resistance except at Irles west of Serre, where a switch trench protected the railway junction at Achiet. Though the German press was jeering the British for their failure to break through, the staff had appraised the menace. Hindenburg was in the saddle to rejuvenate a discouraged army, and drastic strategy was to save the situation. We had known during the winter that the population in the invaded territory was being dragged into slavery to work on the German lines. Contrary to con-

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vention, thousands of military prisoners were also forced to this labor, where they were starved, beaten, and exposed to shell fire. Early Allied activity tore the mask off the surprise before it was completed. Germany was preparing to step back from the pressure to a straighter reserve line which had been built from seven to twenty-five miles behind the original curving front pushed westward between Arras and Soissons.

There was to be no collapse on the old front. Numerous outpost lines were prepared, and the Allies were to be lured eastward from their strong positions. Beyond the protection of their artillery, and backed by the desolate waste of the battle area, they were to be punished in the open, enticed by rear-guard actions to the range of new artillery, and allowed to approach the impregnable Hindenburg line with the maximum of loss and discomfort. Hundreds of batteries of six-inch guns had been constructed—a medium artillery which would comprise caliber and mobility.

The spring plans of the Allies embraced Joffre's aim for a simultaneous offensive on two fronts. On March 3, the French Armies of the Somme had gone south to the concentration on the Aisne, while the British took over the front to Nesle due west of St. Quentin, and resumed their drive west. But preparations were also made for a strong offensive in Artois to gain Lens and clear Arras while the French

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Army drove north on the other front. The British also relieved the Belgian army from Dixmude to the sea. Yet Hindenburg's plan was to defer Allied action in 1917.

On March 17, the fog lifted, and as the British guns opened, huge columns of smoke were seen in Bapaume and Peronne. Troops pushed forward, and found the cities wrecked and evacuated except by rear guards, easily repulsed. Bapaume was taken, and Peronne occupied next day. Below St. Quentin the French found Roye, Noyon, and other places in flames, and their front opposed by strong rear guards. Both armies pushed forward cautiously and ignored the incentive to pursue the fleeing army. Cavalry patrols and infantry screens felt the way and developed ground mines and ambushes—*Panzerkraftwagen*, fast lorries with machine guns, and *Fussartillerie* with extra horses holding promising points. But these took meager toll from the cautious skirmish lines, and cleared off up the roads when pressure developed, plowing up the roads and bridges as they retreated. The entire territory before the Hindenburg line was ruthlessly devastated to make it a waterless glacial of destruction—"the Realm of Death."

History affords few examples of such methodical spoliation and no record to approach the filthy grossness which tainted the work. In November, the Germans started the destruction of trees. By Jan-

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uary, houses, churches, and public buildings were mined. Hamlets and small houses everywhere were burned. On February 10, catalogues of every article of value were checked, and the wholesale looting was systematized. Baron von Hadelhn supervised the official seizure of important art treasures and antiques for Germany, including the Latour pastels of St. Quentin. Then the rest was divided, and demolition patrols started. All wells were unprintably defiled, roads and bridges were mined, and fuel stacked in large buildings. Some stained glass was removed from the churches; the rest was pulverized. Altars were torn down, sacred vessels looted, and the walls dynamited. Cottages were pulled down by horses, while their owners wept.

On signal, at 3:00 A. M., March 17—Hail, German system!—thousands of waiting men finished the destruction. Charges were exploded, fires lit, and at six o'clock all but rear guards marched east. Peronne was a shell; Bapaume, a sad ruin. Chauny was utterly destroyed, its people left standing in the open behind the outposts, and many died before rescue. Noyon was looted, but suffered less; the cathedral was left standing, but even the bronze Christ was torn from the cross and carried off, with the organ, bells, and images. Two chapels were befouled and mottoed in the frequent type of German humor. Nesle was saved by British cavalry who caught the incendiary squads red-handed, while

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French troopers rode round and took three batteries there as they retreated. Roye was only looted and a few landmarks burned. These three larger towns were well west and had to be evacuated hurriedly under Allied pressure. Villages were burned in hundreds.

Only 45,052 of the inhabitants were left, ragged and starving among their ruined homes. Their money was taken, and all supplies left by the American Relief Commission. All women from sixteen to thirty-five were carried off, ostensibly to labor, but the world will gasp with horror when the full story is written. Hundreds of young girls had been debauched by officers, and these pitiful victims were then by unwritten law the property of the soldiers. Special houses of ill-fame, legally controlled, were filled by the victims of vicious orgies. Hungry and unprotected, other women became victims to conditions. In many outlying strongholds girls were kept caged—white slaves maintained for the garrison. Ask the American women who with gas masks went under shell fire and took away convoys of the homeless women and children. They know details of the awful story.

On the Oise, many stately homes were destroyed and historic mausoleums wrecked. In one case a fifteenth century metal coffin was forced open and shockingly defiled, with the inevitable "joke" chalked on it. At Coucy le Château, near the Oise,

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the world's most perfect feudal castle—carefully preserved for centuries from time's erosion—was utterly destroyed.

Von Fléck of the Seventeenth Corps, before he retired to St. Quentin, ordered the loading of all antique furniture and paintings from the country house which he had made his headquarters. The owners were present. The last days were a continued orgy in all the territory. Murder was frequent. Scores of officers quartered in well-known houses raped the women of the household the night they left.

On the night of April 2nd in Washington, while the President was declaring war, dawn was breaking in France, and long-range British guns were already sending the first shots at actual points of the boasted line. These facts reached Berlin simultaneously—the United States had come in. The elastic strategy of Hindenburg had failed utterly! The British were preparing early breakfast on the last outpost lines; they had taken Doignies and Croiselles, and their right was only two miles from St. Quentin. On a wide front, the Germans were pouring back to the Hindenburg line. Before Noreuil, two British companies pursued too closely. They were cut off, captured, and deliberately driven to the fire of their own guns by the exasperated enemy.

In two weeks the Allies had surmounted all obstructions. Bridges and roads had been restored,

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and on the front of one hundred miles they had pushed the rear guards eastward. The British, from five miles south of Arras to St. Quentin, the French continuing the line to the Aisne, had advanced far too rapidly for Hindenburg's plan to develop. The armies that were to gain "voluntary elasticity" to force the Allies to flounder over the glaxis of destruction were being pushed to cover in the magic line itself. The devastation of the area had proved wanton and barren of military result. And the plea of shortening the line? The saving was twenty-one miles. The Somme offensive had forced Germany to yield 1,300 square miles of French territory, with 315 towns and important villages; but in retaliation some of the most beautiful districts in France had been converted into a desert.

"*Les Picards ont la tête chaude!*" is a proverb that Germany will have cause to remember when the Picardy divisions go into action. The sturdy *métayers* of the devastated *arrondissements* will restore the countryside. But they will never forgive the treatment of their women.

When the French and British linked their lines around the suburbs of St. Quentin, fires and explosions showed that the work of destruction had started there. But the guns of the Allies were too close to be used without damaging the city—senti-

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ment won a partial respite, and the enemy retained his hold.

On April 9, Haig's blow above Arras fell—nine hours after Hindenburg had declared to the world that his new defense system was impregnable—his apologia, when the Allies had so rapidly pushed up to it.

The Hindenburg line was the generic term for the new defense system across France along the edge of the devastated area. Starting from the Aisne plateau at right angles to the southern front, with strong protective positions six miles northeast of Soissons to guard the junction, the main section ran due north across the forests west of Laon behind La Fère, where the Oise locks were broken and the district before it flooded. Using the river as a moat, the line was continued along the Oise behind St. Quentin, with the city's circle of defenses as an outpost, to Queant ten miles west of Cambrai. From this point, the upper section, or switch line, ran directly northeast across the Somme Department, crossing four miles east of Arras to the end of the Vimy Ridge, where it joined the original strong line before Lens across Belgium. Forking from the main Siegfried system near Queant, behind this upper oblique barrier, the Wotan reserve line was in course of construction straight north to Drocourt, linking there with the existing reserve line built before the cities of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing.





GERMAN TRENCHES AFTER THE BRITISH BOMBARDMENT



## THE HINDENBURG LINE

The upper section of the new system was not completed when Haig struck at an unexpected moment. And the assault holds the record for results achieved in a single day. The first attack was most heavy on a twelve-mile front below Lens to the southern suburbs of Arras. On the north, the army of General Horn—the Canadian Corps, and mixed English and Scottish divisions—was holding the Souchez front, where sixty thousand French graves marked the futile effort to break the Artois barrier before big guns had been provided. The Vimy Ridge—the Gibraltar of Artois—482 feet high—was the barrier to the plain of Douai and its junction of eight strategic railroads.

Aided by a strong bombardment and the element of surprise, and screened by a blinding snowstorm, sixteen Canadian battalions stormed the steep face of Vimy. On an exact model of the ground each phase of the attack had been rehearsed. Successive lines swept over the ridge, and, pivoting on the left, rolled up the massive defensive system. So rapidly were the troops over the first line that they kicked the machine guns aside, and bayoneted the astonished gunners. Following a perfect barrage, they swept the Germans practically off the ridge and intrenched without a pause. The American battalion took part in the assault and many were killed. The batteries were abandoned when German resistance collapsed. Through perfect artillery and infantry

coöperation, three strong lines were rolled up.

Before Arras, where the rival lines ran through opposite cellars in the same streets, the British swarmed up ladders, tore across regardless of losses, and deluged the enemy with bombs. Supports then swarmed beyond the city, stormed the second line, captured the forts holding the railroad junction, and dug in two miles eastward.

On April 11, the wings of the assault extended to a fifty-mile front from Loos to the Bapaume-Cambrai road. A mine was exploded under the Hohenzollern Redoubt, and the lines were advanced toward Lens. At Vimy Ridge, the Guard Reserve was forming for another counter attack on the northern end where the enemy retained a high spur—Hill 145, “the Pimple.” A short deluge of shells broke their formation; “the Pimple” was captured and the bewildered Guards were partly enveloped and made prisoners.

When the Canadians had captured Vimy, the strongest natural element of the first barrier was cut out and the flank of the new oblique Queant-Arras line was exposed. The outpost positions east of Arras were quickly stormed as the battle spread. Hindenburg’s sphere of elasticity was gone, and on the entire front the enemy was on the defensive, on the breached line itself.

The First British Army under General Horn, operating from La Bassée to the Arras front, made

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steady progress. On the left, Midland troops cleared the Loos sectors and fought their way toward Lens. In two days guns were ready on the Vimy Ridge, and the Canadian Corps and the troops on their right debouched to the plains of Gohelle below, advanced three miles eastward, and captured both the Vimys, Inchy, and Willerval, all being feverishly fortified when taken. By the evening of April 13, the British front for twelve miles was consolidated across the roads to Lens and Douai. The next day the left wing captured Lieven—a twin coal town of Lens—with many prisoners, carloads of supplies, much ammunition, and big naval guns. The spoil included mines that were able to produce one million tons a year for Germany's coal-tar explosives.

The left was soon fighting furiously in a semi-circle in the actual suburbs of Lens, where scores of slag-heaps had been cored with cement and linked as fortifications. Explosions soon proved that the enemy was destroying the mines there, making their prize coal district valueless to hold.

The Third Army under Allenby, operating before Arras along the Scarpe, was also making progress. In the flat land four miles east of the city the main line of defense was protected by a wide area of small triple-storied underground forts—concrete with steel cupolas. A triumph of military engineering, a subject in German textbooks, this amazing barrier in the Hindenburg system was bombarded,

breached, stormed, and entirely captured with its artillery and mass of machine guns, by the 12th. Farther south, Fampoux was taken and a gap made above the great natural rampart of Monchy—a skillfully fortified hill holding the national highway to Cambrai from Arras. It was flanked, then tanked and captured by a frontal attack. The tanks made short work of Hindenburg's dense new wire rows, 300 feet deep, and the troops followed them through. The garrison fought to the last, but the gain was held.

For the first time, the German front was definitely breached. This was the type of gap dreamed of by the earlier strategists. It afforded the clearest opportunity during the war to push the battle to the open, to fling an army through in a hazardous bid for a degree of strategic initiative. But the forces on the spot were exhausted by incessant fighting, culminating in a desperate battle of three days and nights. The flanks had to be rolled up and consolidated, the commands reorganized. Many units were shattered; the loss in officers had been high. When the Staff realized that a great success was impending, they called up cavalry and fresh batteries, in reserve at distant points, and they were ready when the breach was practicable. Masses of cavalry poured through and charged the enemy reserves as they advanced at the double. Horse and field batteries galloped out and came into action in the open,

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and thousands of prisoners were taken. To avoid capture, the German batteries moved south to the unbroken section, but many guns were taken and communications raided over a wide area. A tank went four miles up the road to Cambrai, and on side roads found bewildered supply columns which the cavalry soon captured. In the distance, the tank shot at pioneers working complacently on the reserve line which "might be needed in 1918."

The day was waning, the horses had been pushed to the limit, and there was no water available. Many fell exhausted, and the enormous possibilities for a hazardous incursion were curtailed by thirst and darkness. The tired horses had to go three miles for adequate water.

Hope ran high for a resumption of the big advance at daybreak. But the Allies were now to feel the blasting effect of Russia's failure. By mobilizing every available man—including the 1918 youths—and free from anxiety for the Eastern front, Hindenburg had built up enormous strategic reserves which were entirely available for the west. Half a million fresh troops poured to the southern front to help check the victorious French. The loss of Vimy had called many thousands more, and en route forty train loads were diverted that night to Cambrai and flung out before the serious gap at Monchy. The first battalions had marched over and scratched light trench lines under fire. Their captured orders

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stated that any man who fell back would be shot.

The British cavalry went out at daylight and made some progress, but it was soon forced to fight dismounted, backed by infantry. The batteries took awful toll of the exposed defenders in the open, but were soon answered by new long-range guns and clouds of troops. Under shell fire, in three days, the Germans dug before Monchy gap a triple line of trenches 7,000 yards long. The hazardous opportunity to push in behind the lines had passed, through the fortune of war, or the failure of an overworked staff to provide water for an unexpected contingency. The care taken by the British artillery to spare the church at Monchy is a hitherto unpublished incident. Machine guns, thereby left untouched, cost many British lives during the assault. The first target of the German guns on April 13 was the church.

Haig had now captured seven miles of the upper section of the line. Success had also been achieved by the armies on the right—the Fifth under Gough, operating below the Sensée; and the Fourth, under Rawlinson, continuing the front south to St. Quentin. On March 26, the outpost line at Lagnicourt had been captured. By April 1 the armies here were five miles from the Hindenburg line. The strong outpost lines based on the fortified quarries of Ytres were stormed. The cavalry galloped in a breach and took Equancourt; the positions at Sorel



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and Fins went next; the defenses of Havrincourt woods were flanked and reduced by the capture of Gonnellieu. Heavy guns were dragged over the destroyed area, and were bombarding the main or Siegfried line on the entire Cambrai front to the St. Quentin canal. Villers-Guisian fell, and farther south the capture of Roisel cut the outer railway from Cambrai; while Fayet, a mile from St. Quentin, was captured.

Both frontiers were closed while Germany poured fresh thousands of her strategic reserves to hold the boasted front which was tottering. Pioneers slaved night and day to construct the Oppy line, a crescent, to protect Douai until the Wotan line could be completed from Queant to Drocourt. One hundred and sixty-six German divisions were now trying to hold the general Western front. Regardless of losses, the reserves were thrown in to hinder the results of the battle which was smashing up the German line for twenty miles below Lens and had gained 16,190 prisoners, and 227 guns in its first phase.

During the last week of April the struggle became desperate along the entire front, and both sides lost heavily. The line was a saw-edge of salients driven in between unconquered points, where men fought like tigers in the broken defenses, with attacks and counter attacks won and lost in the gaps. Minor battles raged on the flanks of each stronghold, the British fighting to widen their gains, the Germans

pouring out endless reserves from Vitry. Hindenburg suddenly unmasked a marvelous artillery reserve, and at a dozen advanced points the British were obliterated, enabling the enemy to push in temporarily and straighten their lines.

On April 23, having built up his force, Haig again delivered an assault on the entire front. More ground was gained around Lens. From the Vimy Ridge to the Sensée, succeeding waves of men took Arleux in their stride. Roeux and Oppy definitely fell; then Gavrelle which held the Arras-Douai high-road; and finally Fresnoy. The Oppy crescent was smashed and the guns went forward against the Wotan line. On April 28, the thousandth day of the war, the British were within eight miles of Douai. Between Gavrelle and Monchy, however, Greenland Hill long remained a stubborn German salient, for the holding of which no sacrifice was too great.

Farther south, also, the armies were fighting their way forward. Henin and Croiselles were taken; the breach in the line was widened. Gough's forces were smashing up the line toward Queant. But the formidable position at Fontaine, partly protected by the Sensée River, maintained a three-mile strip before the junction of his left with Allenby's army and resisted all efforts.

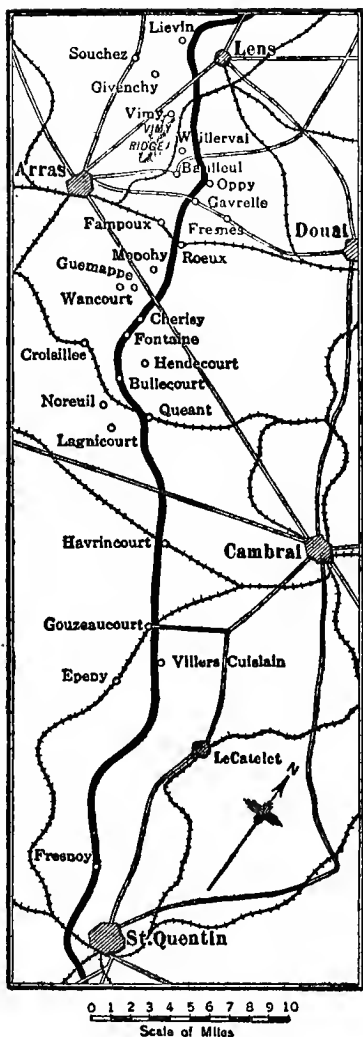
From the end of the central system at Queant, the new reserve line forked straight north, behind the tottering oblique line to Vimy. It was being

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strengthened night and day, though its northern end was already breached. On May 3, the Australians broke through the first line above Queant, and with a narrow gap as entrance they pushed across and extended in the prong of the fork before a section of the reserve line. For two weeks a unique battle was fought on a sandwiched front, with the Germans on the front line fighting back to back against the British attacking the inner line.

This gap on the front line was widened. On the night of the 14th, vast waves of men attempted to close this gap. Australians and Londoners lost heavily in the fighting, but drove the enemy back. Then machine guns swept from the flanks and a pitiless shell curtain left only a heap of German dead at daylight. The Lehr Regiment, the Kaiser's *Cock-chafers*, also made a desperate attempt to sweep down the fork to clear the sandwiched front. Two companies moved between the lines while a frontal attack was raging, but they were discovered and surrounded by the New South Wales troops and driven like sheep through the front gap, where they surrendered.

But the stubborn point on the Scarpe, and the Fontaine-Bullecourt strip greatly retarded a general British advance. When Cherisy was taken, the guns could enfilade the Fontaine strip on the north. Gough's artillery was pounding the line toward Bullecourt where some batteries expended 6,000



MAP NO. 7.—THE BRITISH GRIP ON THE HINDENBURG LINE.

In May, 1917, the British were holding all the main sections of the line above St. Quentin, while east of Arras the front was pushed far beyond it. This section runs southeast.

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rounds a day. At many points the infantry broke through, only to have their wedges dominated and annihilated. But the gap maintained near Rien-court was finally widened to 800 yards. Then Bullecourt was approached from the south in short desperate rushes. On May 17 the London troops stormed a section above it, the Australians fought their way up from the flank below, and the stronghold was captured with its garrison, which fought to the last.

The Allied sweep had teemed with incidents. The weather marked the most stormy spring in memory. But the troops, under the elixir of advance, cared little for hardships. They were at last fighting in the open, and the tedium of trench warfare seemed ended. The batteries maneuvered at the trot; the infantry reverted to field tactics, and the cavalry was often in action. During the first ten days the British batteries fired 4,000,000 shells. At one point the General commanding the Seventeenth Bavarian Division was signing a report to Prince Rupprecht on the bombardment, when six dusty Tommies walked into his dugout. "Are you prisoners?" he asked curtly in English. "You are," replied a soldier, smiling. His staff and many of his men were captured with him. At Lagnicourt, below Arras, the Guards charged the Australian advance line and broke through. In the open, they met the reserves who fought from a hedge while the

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batteries galloped to the flank and enfiladed the enemy, who fled leaving 1,600 dead on the field.

Before Monchy, too, the Third Bavarian Division charged in solid masses. But after a burst of firing on a wide section, the British evacuated their first lines almost without loss. Screens of batteries on the flank then enfiladed the position and tore it to pieces directly the line was in German hands.

The Germans had perfected an *Infanterieflieger*—a line of heavy battle planes for the “Fifth Arm”—to lead infantry assaults. But swift British flight squadrons with frontal fire were ready the same week and occupied a battle front of ten miles during attacks, restoring air superiority for fighting units. Pyramid squadrons, machines for artillery observation at 6,000 feet, fighting planes at 10,000 feet, and a cone of swift scouts on top at 15,000 feet, proved effective, and during several summer battles no hostile planes except rapid scouts have operated over the Allied lines, while French and British squadrons have swept over the German armies hourly. But the Germans have specialized on powerful raiding squadrons to attack communications and rest camps in surprise sallies. These have been very successful.

During this fighting, the 176th Infantry, Thirty-fifth Division, were remarkably considerate to the British wounded captured in the second great counter attack and rescued five days later when the de-

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cision was reversed. For this general act of consideration, the British Army commends to its Allies for special treatment any man of this unusual regiment, if captured. Some of its units taken in later fighting were carried shoulder high and treated as honored guests.

South of Queant, great gaps were torn in Hindenburg's central system and the gains were widened to Neuville, on a front of eight miles to St. Quentin. Rawlinson's artillery was now bombarding the main roads from Cambrai and was close to the canal—its reserve defense.

By the end of May the character of the fighting had entirely changed. Hindenburg and Ludendorff had rushed along their shattered line. At first their heavy guns had spared the strongest sections of the system they had hoped to recover. But the insensate counter attacks died down and their heavy guns opened promiscuously on the entire front. The deep new wire was little protection with tanks to lead the way. Hindenburg's vaunted system had proved as legendary as the mythological heroes after whom the lines were named. His plan was one grand error. But by a strange irony his reputation was saved by the potency of the shells that had wrecked his line, but made the new defense feasible.

The entire front was pitted with British shell craters. In these, a few sandbags and machine guns easily created a mass of minor forts, spread over a

great depth. Those in the rear were reënforced at night by concrete vaults capped by cupolas easily hidden by dirt and weeds. The *Maschinen Eisen Betun Unterstand* had been previously planned to form a long barrier across the Russian front, to release part of the defensive army. Conditions there enabled the materials to be rushed to the west, to be implanted easily in the shell craters.

The M. E. B. U. system—dubbed the “May Be” by the facetious Tommies—saved the threatened front. Spread thickly over a wide, shell-torn area, these scattered targets were difficult for artillery to locate or destroy and afforded no defined line. A direct hit alone hurts them, and many survived the most methodical bombardment to remain silent and unseen until the infantry assaults. Then they swept front and flanks, each one enfilading the approaches to its fellow. Special tank mortars were also developed to hurl huge shells at short range when a monster approached. This fortuitous evolution in defensive tactics averted disaster from following defeat. The ultimate test will be in morale. The communications of these new scattered garrisons are precarious, and escape is generally impossible.

The British had now failed to break through. During May (after the great initial victories) the losses were 112,332. Except at Lens, the four British armies in France gradually relapsed to intensive



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trench warfare while the new positions were consolidated and strengthened. But the armies were within definite reach of Douai and Cambrai. To protect these vital junctions, the Germans were forced to expose their reserves in the open at prodigal cost, and the great concentration effected for 1917 was used in holding ground when it should have been available for a formidable offensive. The passive Russian Army reaped the principal benefit. No German forces were free to strike a decisive blow in the east when the army was demoralized, and an offensive could have gone as far as its columns could march during the summer. Germany retained only twelve active divisions in her army on the Russian front. The remainder were entirely Landwehr and Landsturm formations.

In spite of their offensive on the Aisne, the French also made good progress on their thirty-mile front below St. Quentin, and held a strong German force on this line. From the outer curve below Noyon, they had, in places, twenty-five miles of devastated country to cross before they were in touch with the revised German front. They got their guns over the Somme Canal, and with their left on St. Quentin drove the enemy from his outworks and closed on the Hindenburg line along the Oise. They gained Tergnier, the railroad junction on the Paris-Brussels line, and pushed their guns close to the flooded area before La Fère, maintaining a heavy fire on the Ger-

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man front across the swamp and sweeping the approaches to the city.

Below Chauny, the enemy made a determined stand in the Couchy forest; but the French pushed in from the south across the Ailette, and the Germans were pushed back to a salient formed by the forest-clad hills of Gobain. Northeast of Soissons, also, the Leuilly outpost line was smashed and the enemy pushed back to the Albrecht line built before Laon to protect the angle with the Aisne front. These operations were the ground work for the wedge at Vauxaillon, which played a big part in the Aisne offensive, and a basis for the capture of Laon where Germany expects an American army to strike first.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

ON the eve of their great spring offensive, the German retreat and its orgy of devastation magnetized the French with mixed feelings of hope and resentment. "France is bled white!" shrieked von Reventlow, the frightful, after Verdun. The response was a concentration of national energy during the winter to sustain a blow decisive in aim and so great that an entire volume would do scant justice to its ramifications. Yet the offensive was comprehensively simple in its execution, and in general terms it can be described in a few pages.

Electrified by her Verdun victories, France demanded an aggressive effort. There was a feeling that the day for Joffre's policy of nibbling had passed. There was no deep bitterness in the political crisis which arose. But Joffre retired, Foch went to study conditions on the Swiss frontier, De Castelnau went to Russia, and Nivelle, who had retrieved Verdun, was appointed to command the armies. A new supply of guns, and a vast stock of shells manufactured by the women of the Republic, had made the artillery powerful, and early in April

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the picked corps of the French Grand Army were concentrated on the selected sectors between Soissons and Souain.

At 8:30 on April 16, the first assault was delivered along the Aisne plateau, between Soissons and Rheims, against the front traversed by the ancient road of chivalry, the Chemin des Dames, where von Kluck made his great stand, and along its curve over the heights northwest of Rheims where von Buelow's left had rallied. A special force operated against the hills above Rheims, notably Brimont, where guns shook the world by their insensate *Strafe* of the Cathedral. Backed perfectly by the artillery, the troops stormed successive German lines, breaking in and rolling them up in sequence.

When the first Aisne lines were down and the Crown Prince had hurried over his guns and reserves, flinging in sixteen divisions, an unexpected assault was delivered on the Rheims heights. The objectives in this wide battle were the capture of Laon and its railroads, and the release of Rheims from the destructive curve clamped above the city. Conditions in the districts involved have been fully described in earlier chapters.

Miles of *tortillard* had been built by the French during the winter, so that men and supplies could be railed rapidly to necessary points. A feature of the attack was the support rendered by the field batteries which followed the infantry closely, protecting

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each sector with local creeping barrage, and meeting each emergency as it arose. German counter attacks were broken up; points developing special resistance were subdued by a rain of shells, and for three days French progress was hardly halted.

On the first day of uphill battle the front lines along the Aisne were crushed from Missy to the Craonne plateau, where a footing was gained on the height and a wedge driven into the second line toward Juvencourt. The Ville aux Bois was surrounded and an entire regiment captured. East of Soissons also a huge gain was made on the flank of the positions gained by von Kluck during the Aisne flood, where a huge salient dominated by Fort Conde reached across the river and enabled the enemy to launch assaults on the south bank and menace the rear of the Aisne line.

All German counter attacks were repulsed, and at daylight the French again swept forward, extending the right of the attack for seventeen miles of Auberive over the fortified hills east of Rheims from Mont Cornillet across the Moronvillers *massif* to Vaudevincourt. The heights were protected on the face by seven trench lines, which were captured. Huge wedges of men then fought their way forward on either side of the plateau. On the east, Auberive was stormed, flanked, and taken. From this salient the ridge on the north was won and the second part of the third lines on Moronvillers were flanked and

turned. Forces from the wedge on the west had worked around in rear, and the face of the stubborn plateaux, six and a half miles of solid fortifications—in places 1,000 feet high—was captured on the third day with most of the heavy artillery.

The most stubborn fighting occurred on the heights above Rheims, where the German guns were retaliating uselessly on the tortured city. At terrific cost, a footing was gained on the heights of Bricourt, but the first progress could not be maintained. The Russian Division fought splendidly along the Aisne-Marne Canal to Courcy, which was successfully stormed, enabling a wedge to push up along the railroad west of Brimont. Farther west, the French pushed up on both sides of the Craonne plateau along the Laon road, and on the left took Chavonne, which was stubbornly defended, and Ostel, a mile above.

Along the general Aisne front, between Missy and Chavonne, the French had cleared a wide system of field fortifications, including the approaches to Bray. Seventeen thousand prisoners and 92 guns were the proceeds of the first three days. The Germans were pushed back from successive positions, but rallied in a general line marked by the Chemin des Dames, in many places 500 feet higher than the original French line above the river, and with the Ailette Valley between them.

The junction of the Hindenburg system on the west front to the Aisne line was protected by a nest

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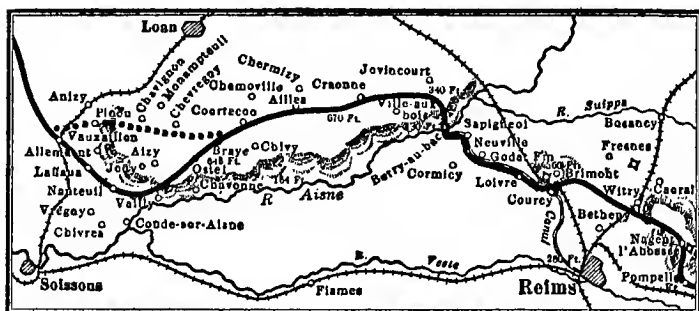
of outpost positions across the road from Soissons to Laon. The ground gained at Vailly east of the salient maintained by Fort Conde and its bridge-head south of the river, became the base of an ambitious plan to drive the wedge deeply northwest to meet the apex of a similar wedge to be forced in southeast, from the west front at Laffaux. This would obviously cut out a corner of ugly outpost defenses between Laon and Soissons, and would include in the isolated area Fort Conde, a hill 400 feet high, with its wide field of fire which made it impregnable for ordinary attack. On a smaller scale, the operation repeated the first abortive efforts made by Germans to isolate Verdun.

Nanteuil was captured by a unique sweep of French cavalry. When the artillery had broken a gap on the flank which the infantry stormed and widened, the cavalry rode into the break, galloped behind the town, and completed its envelopment before the reserves could get up. This cleared the front south of Laffaux and to the approaches to Fort Malmaison holding the road to Laon. The French also took Neuville above it. Reserves poured down the road from Laon to hold the road, but with the French on three sides a simultaneous attack captured Laffaux with its mass of fortified quarries, where French women kept for the garrison were released in pitiable condition. Joffre started his mission to the United States with the

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most encouraging situation on the front that France had known since the victory of the Marne.

On April 19, the French advanced above Soissons from the west and south. Again the Twentieth Corps was in the van, on the wedge east of Conde. The German guns escaped through the narrowing gap, but the Saxon brigade was too slow; it was caught between two fires and the survivors surrendered.



MAP NO. 8.—SCENE OF THE FRENCH OFFENSIVE ON THE AISNE BETWEEN SOISSONS AND REIMS, 1917.

Dotted line on the left shows ground gained below Laon, Oct., 1917.

The Germans fell back to the reserve Siegfried line protecting Laon, and along the Chemin des Dames, which here runs on the highest part of the Aisne plateau, abandoning the Vregny salient, though their guns could still enfilade part of the Aisne Valley. On April 20, fresh German divisions were thrown on the Aisne front. But the French



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were now a mile north of Ostel; Bray en Laonnais was captured and the entire front eastward to Courtcon, with five batteries and three depots with stores—gains held in the face of five desperate counter attacks. At three points they were touching the famous road.

Nivelle was now free to develop the second phase of his battle for the actual capture of Laon. The city stands at the apex of a triangular block of heights rising from the Aisne Valley, which outlines the base of the position. The road from Soissons to Laon marks one side of the triangle, and the upper section of the Rheims-Laon road across the Craonne plateau, the other.

Fighting its way north from the Aisne, the army was pushing up the base of this triangle, while on either side wedges northeast from Laffaux and northwest through Craonne were to close toward the apex, Laon, each operation automatically shortening the lines of attack. With the capture of Vauxaillen above Laffaux, the grip had widened on the Hindenburg system across the Laon road. Rains hampered the operations, but the French forces to the east concentrated on the edge of the Craonne plateaux, and on May 4, they swept across, smashing the defenses, capturing Craonne, and driving the enemy from the Casemates, and the Californie, called in Germany the "*Winterberg*."

As the French were digging in on the plateaux,

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three selected divisions, headed by Roehr's shock units, made a desperate drive at Berry au Bac, southeast of the new gains. The *Fusil Mitrailleurs* took heavy toll of the charging masses, but numbers finally told. The French front was broken and the Germans sent up fresh troops to push in behind the distended lines. The enemy was now on the river, menacing the right flank and rear of the entire Aisne line. A great disaster threatened. Nivelle at once gathered a force to check the menace. Thousands of gallant French soldiers threw themselves against the elated enemy, and during the next day the gains were localized and walled in at heavy cost. The Crown Prince was concentrating his energy to press the advantage. Berlin announced that the French front was broken. And with superb confidence, at the height of this crisis east of Craonne, Nivelle ordered a general advance along the entire Aisne front.

The Germans were caught off guard by this astounding offensive. The French Army smashed their entire front of eighteen miles and, except below Laon, drove them right off the Aisne ridges, sweeping across the Chemin des Dames. The tri-color was waving triumphantly on the backbone of the barrier that had marked the western half of Germany's southern war frontier. The French Armies were looking down on the Ailette Valley, with magnificent observation posts and artillery positions to

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pave the way to Laon, whose spires glittered among the wooded hills only seven miles distant—a prize to which they now held most of the important approaches. In some sections, the front had been advanced four miles. Official Germany was stunned at the news and Hindenburg rushed to the Headquarters of the Crown Prince, pushing his car under shell fire to look over the scene of the reverse.

During the battle, furious fighting had taken place before Rheims. With the entire Aisne line pushed north, the front east of Juvincourt curved sharply back southeast by the Berry au Bac salient to the canal and the occupied hills north of the city. With a strong footing on both sides of Brimont, the French now strove to break in from the curve above it and envelop it from the north. On a six-mile front, the French had pushed the line toward the valley of the Suippe.

East of Rheims, Fort Pompelle was retaken and definite wedges were driven between the heights of the old French fortified line toward Beine. Baden, Saxon, and Brandenburg troops held the three observation posts 1,000 feet high, on the line toward Auberive, and these changed hands definitely by May 20, after a furious struggle.

But France was to reap the fruits of bitter disappointment through the continued stagnation in Russia. The German Army on the east front had rested and refitted; its artillery had been passive for weeks,

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using no ammunition, while the Russian gunners stood idle with a stock of British shells sent to enable winter pressure to follow Brusiloff's offensive. The German artillery was soon transferred to France and extended in an unbroken curve below Laon and above Rheims, to check a further French advance. Division after division of troops was rushed from the Russian front to stem the French tide, which had sacrificed 85,000 men when the chance for a final decision was taken from them.

Toward the end of May, when the French on the west front were cutting out huge sections of the fortified Gobain forest, and normally would have followed up their victories on the south front, intense bombardments broke up their advances.

On June 4, German waves, a division strong, flowed simultaneously against the Casemates, Californie, and Vauclerc plateaux. The Crown Prince repeated his Verdun tactics. Guns were concentrated in curves on definite sectors; the troops attacked in dense masses. To save life where yards of ground were not vital, the French withdrew from their front lines when the bombardment opened. At close range their field batteries poured shells at the advancing masses, harried the survivors in the captured trenches, and then recaptured the position with the bayonet. Assault after assault inflicted severe losses on the forces of the Crown Prince, but the French casualties were also heavy. Twice the

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enemy attained a definite footing on the plateaux, but was ejected by counter attacks and the early gains were made good. West of Rheims ground was also gained between Monts Blond and Cornillet, but on the iron circle above the city a concentration of men and guns made further progress impossible, and the ancient capital has been smashed out of recognition in retaliation.

Senator Root has spoken of the annoyance expressed by the leaders of the revolution in Russia because the French and British missions urged that the army should instantly recommence operations. Decisive results were never nearer than at the hour that Russia failed. The British had re-equipped her army with field batteries, heavy guns, and crews to man them. But while Russia was wrangling, the early promise of the British and French offensives was negatived by guns and reserves that could have been held on the eastern front by normal pressure.

Failing at Craonne, the Crown Prince attacked on the Champagne front, and failing there he opened a terrific bombardment on the Chemin des Dames, followed by desperate assaults that gained a definite footing at some points. Again the French regained the ground by counter attack. Then the assault spread suddenly to the Craonne heights, where ground was regained by the Germans at appalling cost, only to be lost a week later.

Hindenburg determined to retake the lost ridges

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at all costs. The positions were important, but the fury of the assaults was inspired by a double motive. He hoped to break the heart of France before an adequate army could be sent from the United States. He feared the hour when those fresh and ardent forces might strike along the Aisne front, where even the investment of Laon coupled with the loss or destruction of Douai by the British, would cripple the railway system and force another strategic retreat, with a severe modification of the rectangle maintained in France.

During June and July the fighting raged on without respite. Both sides made gains. The French counter attack on June 27 broke the German front at Hurtebise farm. In the impetuosity of the assault, the troops swept by the entrance to the famous Dragons' Cave, and its garrison surrendered ignominiously to a French priest who came up to help the wounded. On July 4, the Germans made their major effort to regain the Chemin des Dames. The attack was repeated on the 14th and changed to Craonne on the 24th, but the efforts of seventy divisions—over a million men—have not been able to entirely affect the French position, and the German losses have been prodigious. During August the attacks degenerated into mere trench raids on a large scale and on September 4 many German batteries were sent north to Belgium.

The French maintained their hold on the heights,

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but their losses were appalling. The capture of Laon must be effected by more patient tactics. Perhaps the price for the ridges was too high to pay since the audacious operation came to a standstill. Pétain was restored to the supreme command, with Foch chief of staff. Nivelle retired with Mangin to await the verdict of history which can be rendered only when the effect of the waste of Germany's man power can be weighed.

Below Laon the Germans still held high ground before the French lines with dominating artillery positions. For some days *Trommelfeuern* epitomized the German reports from this sector. On October 25 the cars of General Pétain, Generals Pershing and Sibert and many American officers drove at dawn to join D'Esperey's forces. Hindenburg's main reserves had gone to the Italian front, and the French were to strike another blow for Laon. Under the interested eyes of American officers of all branches, picked forces led by General Maistre attacked between Vauxvaillon and Chevrigny.

The western front curved round the St. Gobain *massif*, with Fort Malmaison holding the southeastern approaches before which the previous offensive had been halted. By midday the French had pushed round the fort. Field guns were thrown forward close behind the line of attack, and Malmaison fell. On the second day the Germans were pushed back across the valley, the Forest of Pinon was in

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French hands, and twenty-five square miles of ground had been gained at the base of the Laon triangle, with cave and quarry strongholds, and a section of the old Brussels railroad. Many guns and 11,000 prisoners were taken in the stroke which would allow a wedge to be driven between St. Gobain and Laon. In a few days the Germans withdrew across the Ailette, abandoning the salient below the city.

The loss of Laon, which links the railroads from the north and east, would be a serious blow, and coupled with the growing wedge in Belgium, would force Germany to retire to the strong Meuse line already prepared from Antwerp across Belgium to Charleroi, and along the Meuse to the east of Verdun, a buffer to her own frontier.



## CHAPTER XIII

BELGIUM, 1917

WITH the French Armies staggering under successive blows above the Aisne, and the forces on the British front in France recuperating from heavy losses, consolidating their front along the Hindenburg line, and building permanent communications, the offensive again changed to Belgium.

When Foch with his meager Anglo-French divisions was holding up the German flood in Belgium, the Germans had gained the ridges below the Ypres salient which overlooked the entire area, and for thirty-two months their guns had been able to shell the rear of the British lines. From stubby Hill 60, where the Dorset Regiment was asphyxiated by gas in the night, and before which thousands of British dead were heaped in successive attacks to avenge the deed, and from Wytschaete and Messines ridges, the batteries had daily shattered hundreds of the dogged men exposed on the salient which gas alone had contracted but which had never broken.

The Duke of Wurttemberg had gone to command the Franco-German frontier, and Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria now controlled the entire line from Laon

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to the coast. For a year, General Plumer and the Second Army had been waiting for the order to attack and avenge the Ypres shambles. For ten months the engineers had driven mine galleries under the ridges in the impervious clay stratum that underlies the sand in Flanders and makes the fen land rich for farming but difficult to intrench or to maneuver across after rains that can never dry in. The clay now proved a blessing. German counter mines found only sand that caved in, and so 450 tons of ammonal were packed and wired in secret, while the enemy batteries above the petards grew abundantly and men in concrete tunnels jeered at the growing gun power in the plain below.

Through the night of June 6 a stupendous artillery duel raged as the troops moved up on a ten-mile front, below Ypres, before the ridges, and across Ploegstaert to the frontier. At 2:00 A. M., the Sapper General reported to Headquarters after final inspection, and for minutes that seemed hours officers peered at their luminous dials with hands that crept from 3:00 A. M. to 3:10. Then geysers of yellow flame tore skyward; a shock of air stunned hundreds of men; the roar rolled across to expectant England, and roused Holland from sleep. Over a wide expanse a torrent of rocks, concrete, dirt, trees, bits of metal, and human fragments rained back to the soil of tortured Belgium. Then one thousand guns opened across the smoking abyss.

When the long lines of troops rushed forward, the waves that crossed the torn area were followed by a mass of bearer companies who mercifully bore out the enemy injured. "Do you call this war?" wailed an officer as he was carried to the dressing station. "Do you call that war?" answered the surgeon, pointing to Ypres ghastly in the fitful gun-glare.

In one triumphant rush the Irish Division took Wytschaete—Nationalists and Ulster battalions fighting as brothers in the common cause. The Anzacs swept Messines clear. The Twenty-fourth Saxons and Twenty-third Bavarians were about to be relieved, and the One Hundred and Fourth Infantry and Third Bavarians were marching up when the explosion occurred. The uninjured men in the approach trenches went back passively as prisoners, and the assaulting lines were soon swarming over the ruins against the dazed reliefs. They had taken shelter in the woods and made a sporadic resistance, but were rounded up during the day.

The tunneled emplacements, forts of six-foot concrete, and the maze of trenches on the crests were torn up and thrown in a jumble in twelve yawning craters. Many guns were farther back, and escaped while the troops were storming the fortified towns beyond the mine area, though the dazed prisoners soon surrendered for effective artillery fire had followed the explosive shock.

On the entire front the first lines were captured in

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ten minutes. The second line south of the ridges developed a strong resistance from concrete trenches screened in the woods. The English battalions on the right lost heavily, but would not be denied, and they finally pushed the front forward to less than a mile from Warneton.

Reserve defenses, east of the ridges, were soon strongly reënforced, and the British advance was checked until the field batteries came up at a gallop after thirty-two months in camouflage, the drivers cheering in the saddle, the horses sharing the excitement that only gun and fire teams know. By night the crucial five miles below Ypres were pushed forward three miles and the bloody salient had passed. As Allenby had won a victory at Greenland Hill on the previous day, the Germans had now been cleared from all the ridges to Rheims which at first had made their grip in the west comparatively easy to maintain. After vain counter attacks and a daily British advance, the enemy retreated to a straight front between Hollebeke and Warneton, on June 15.

Intermittent fighting of a brisk character has continued on the Hindenburg line during the summer and autumn, and various points have been taken, but the bulk of the fighting there raged around Lens. The Canadians took the electric light station on June 4, but 500 guns drove them back. On the 28th, they took Avion—just as they heard that an American army had landed in France. Daily the fighting

raged, with a steady progress measured in yards. On August 15, the Canadians captured Hill 70 and St. Laurent, cleaning the Loos sector, and placed a forceps closely on Lens, and as the shell is now useless for Germany's coal, continual sacrifice is not necessary—the guns take the toll.

After the Messines victory, however, Belgium remained the center of British activity. Early in 1917, the Ministry of Munitions had provided for a lavish output of large-caliber shells of unusual potency. Woolwich had perfected a new type of heavy field howitzer, advantageous in range and mobility, and new artillery of extraordinary strength was ready in June to carry out a new policy of blasting a steady path forward to save the suicidal waste of men. The casualties incurred in carrying one defense system on the Somme were 40,000—an army corps. British losses in August, 1916, were 127,945 men—far too heavy for a war of endurance.

The flat country of Flanders was eminently fitted for this war by artillery. There were more vital sectors in France, but most were thickly settled, and each one would entail the destruction of valuable towns about which German defense is centered. A methodical advance across Belgium might automatically free Lille and turn the western line, and it would force German reserves to face attrition in open country with less opportunity for ruthless destruction of property. The guns started in June. I

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have heard their thunder when at sea, 130 miles away.

To forestall the threatened offensive from spreading along the coast to the submarine bases, Germany struck a brilliant blow. To enforce the withdrawal of vital squadrons of the Royal Flying Corps from the front, ruthless air raids were made on England. The busiest street of Folkestone, a seashore resort, was deliberately bombed by daylight one Saturday evening. Civilians on the Essex coast were blown to pieces the following week, and then London at midday, where two machines sought out the quarters of General Pershing's men who had gone to France on the previous evening. Thirteen machines, however, dropped torpedoes and incendiary bombs on the most crowded streets, and hundreds of noncombatants were killed or injured.

On July 7, London was again attacked. The machines flew at a low altitude. I have witnessed many air raids, but none where the destruction of civilians was so deliberately sought. In perfect phalanx the machines swept across the city and launched their bombs only in crowded thoroughfares like Holborn and St. Paul's. A few civilian lives are of less importance than the safety of the army that is enduring all the horrors of war. But popular opinion demanded more protection, and until new squadrons were formed, a strong flotilla was diverted to watch for raiders—and on July 10 the army paid the price.

The British had taken over the Belgian left from Dixmude to the coast. On a front of ten miles from the sea to Nieuport the trenches were built half a mile east of the Yser, with communications on pontoon bridges across the canalized river whose banks here are deep and reënforced to prevent floods at high tide. With the air service depleted, the British did not discover a concentration of naval guns before this sector. There are also stories of treacherous lights which disclosed the positions of the bridges. At daybreak, direct hits smashed the communications and a terrific bombardment tore to pieces the British trenches in the sand dunes. For an hour the first line was churned by shells, which then broke up the support trenches.

The new thunder of guns toward Ostend rolled far seaward and cheered the hearts of the tireless naval auxiliaries. When we heard the firing we interpreted it as the tocsin of the first blow toward the submarine base at Zeebrugge which would help to free the seas. At night the truth was learned. A concentrated barrage had torn up the defenses in the dunes. The showers of sand clogged rifles and buried machine guns, and a fire curtain on the river destroyed all efforts to restore bridges and get up reënforcements. I tried to get a comprehensive story from two of the few survivors, but no one had been able to see in the blasts of blinding sand.

In the evening, from six until seven, *Trommelfeuer*

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raged across the area, and at low tide the naval corps delivered a massed attack, moving through the shallow water to envelop the flank. The trapped troops fought to the last, but sand had made even the Lewis guns useless. Many wounded had been gathered in a shore tunnel. Marines went straight to its mouth and poured in liquid fire. There was only one survivor. At the headquarters of the Sixtieth Rifles, the officers used their revolvers to the last and all were killed; while a surrounded group of boy officers of the Northhamptons on the right stood fighting back to back until a machine gun piled them in a heap. The troops, too, were magnificent. Even at the last, only twenty unwounded men retired across the river, where impotent British batteries could not fire into an area filled with friend and foe.

The Nieuport approaches were reënforced and held, but the enemy advanced his lines to the Yser, adding to the difficulties of a British advance along the coast—which to the layman appears so easy in coöperation with the navy. Some minor trench howitzers were lost—significant from the fact that it was the first British artillery captured by Germany in two years and two months. Except at Verdun, France has lost no uninjured gun in the same period.

From the sea, the region of the sand dunes and the dredged mouth of the Bruges canal, from which U-boats creep and fast destroyers dash out on foggy nights to bombard unfortified towns, looks simple



enough. But twice I have seen that coast erupt in the dark. Long-range naval guns on concrete are packed closely among the dunes; the sea area is exactly plotted, and the naval cost of Zeebrugge would be a high one.

The reverse, however, was local. On the strip of Belgium where the knightly King lives among his soldiers and the Queen works tirelessly among the wounded, the mass of British guns is growing, and on its slow potency the Belgians have now pinned their hopes. The cost of such artillery is staggering, but on July 31 its effects had their first test. A French Army had again moved north of Ypres to the lines where the first gas attack murdered their unsuspecting soldiers. They were massed on the curve from Dixmude to the "Big Shoot" road, with the British on the right before Langmarck and St. Julien, and on the long, but now straightened, front east of Ypres to Warneton in France. On this twenty-mile front the Allies swept forward in unison, and captured the first and second German lines.

The third anniversary of the war was ushered in by a sixty-hour downpour of rain, caused by the heavy gunfire—the curse of great offensives. But the French were fighting in the ruins of Bixshoote, and the British were across the Steenbeck River, with Pilkem taken and the outworks of Langemarck and St. Julien. At night, the German reserves

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gained ground before both these towns, but the entire front had been advanced again, and east of Ypres the British line was pushed a mile along the Menin road, with Hooze and Hollebeke captured.

But the reserve lines were a scattered mass of small forts against which the infantry floundered through deep mud, an easy mark for machine guns, and the attacks were recalled to consolidate the new line and allow the guns to pave the way. The front was mudlocked for ten days. Attacks and counter attacks were local, but the guns continued. On August 10, the line again went forward. Many forts had survived the pitiless bombardment, but the British took Westhoek, and each day the line made progress.

In a week, the French had pushed steadily forward northeast of Ypres and flanked the Yser line. The British cleared the rest of Langemarck and put their lines one thousand yards beyond. Boys of the 1918 class were captured in the fighting, and the Seventy-ninth Division broke and retired when the first attack was launched.

By August 23, the British were breaking up the maze of minor forts east of St. Julien and clearing the fortified woods which make an almost impregnable defense. On the 27th, they finally cleared the third system on a mile front across the Poelcappelle Road. Section by section ground was gained. Hampered by intolerable weather the front has been



BRITISH WOUNDED ON THE MENIN ROAD. OCTOBER, 1917



MASSSED GERMAN RESERVES READY TO CHARGE NEAR YPRES, 1915

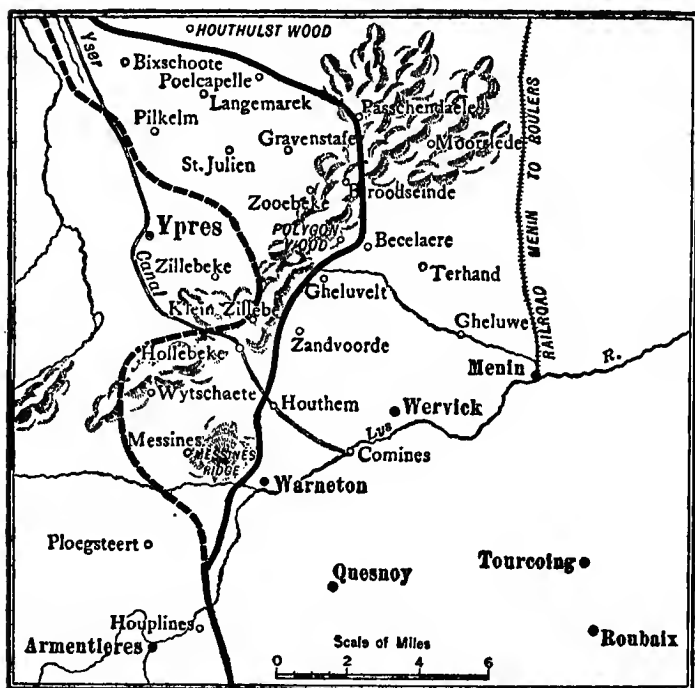


pushed forward over four miles toward Roulers. After trusting to mud, and sacrificing misfits in thousands, Prince Rupprecht soon detrained some of his finest troops at Iseghem, and put them on the lines before the British, who were fighting mud rather than men. On October 12, Passchendaele ridge was in their grip. But mud held the supports floundering until the machine guns wiped them out, and the line had to fall back, losing heavily. Nothing had dried fourteen days later when the troops again waded waist-deep in water across the morass and stormed Bellevue, and gradually closed over the end of the ridge. The position was dotted with small screened forts which had to be charged and subdued by hand, under the most difficult conditions that the war has produced. Many wounded sank under the slime, but in three days all objectives were gained. On November 6 the British took Passchendaele village five and one-half miles from Roulers, and obtained a definite grip on the ridge to base their operations on the plain below.

France and Belgium have also been wading together, widening the base of the broad British wedge along the edge of Houthulst Forest. And Anthoine has thrown his guns across the swamp, near Merckem, enfilading and forcing the German batteries to retire. Thus the pressure is widening to the coast as the British front is approaching Roulers, cutting across communications with Ostend

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and gradually approaching the road to Bruges, from which the canal leads to Zeebrugge, the port which had been reconstructed just when war broke out,



MAP NO. 9.—THE ALLIED DRIVE IN BELGIUM.

The British Army is aiming for the railroads across Belgium to the coast. The French are on the north of the wedge with the Belgian Army fighting on their left along the Yser Canal. The broken line shows the front of the old Ypres salient.

with German interests fostering the undertaking.

Pressure is also growing toward Menin, where the British are approaching communications above Lille

with the Ghent-Antwerp line their objective. Though the German system now keeps its reserves well back and relies on mud and the deep belt of scattered forts, the British artillery can place barrage miles behind the line, and the reserves lose heavily in getting up. Shell fire all night makes it difficult also to supply the scattered defenses with food and ammunition.

The Flanders battle must prove slow and conservative. In the first two weeks the British loss was only 21,735. The August total was 59,811 and the last week of October 24,091 officers and men. This is about the number in the massive column that swept down Fifth Avenue for five hours on August 30, a comparison which helps to visualize the cost of modern war.

Germany has yet to be expelled from 29,000 square kilometers of Belgium and 19,000 square kilometers of France. But this is no hour for pessimism. No longer when in Holland shall we live on American canned products and watch 10,000 cattle go to Germany in a single May week. The new guns are patiently paving the way in Belgium. At Lens, the knell has been sounded to Germany's stolen coal industry, for which she expended lives like water. West and south in France the Allies are now on the enemy's main positions. Douai, Cambrai, St. Quentin, and Laon are within reach, if they cannot be saved automatically from the destruction that will

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attend forcible evacuation. The Verdun gate to France is now barred as strongly as ever.

In Alsace, France still holds 1,000 square kilometers of ground within the German frontier. And on the peaceful pastures of French Lorraine a new army is growing daily and building road and rail for the great base of the legions yet to come. Its final destination, the Germans say, is the Aisne. The location of its base may presage that "Old Glory" will lead the way to German soil.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE UNITED STATES STEPS IN

FOR nearly three years, thousands of French children had been praying "*Que le cœur de Jésus sauve la France!*" That is the reason why some of them in simple faith knelt among the cheering crowd that greeted the first American contingent. In the quaint French seaport selected for the base of the new army, there was no news of the coming until the flagship swung in with the first transports early on the morning of June 26. Rear Admiral Gleaves' squadron had escorted the ships safely across, beating off submarines, and the flower of the United States Regular Army was landed without the loss of a man. Perhaps nothing has so thoroughly tested the efficiency of the War and Navy Departments or given a happier augury for the future than the equipment and transportation of this great expeditionary force to Europe. Compare the achievement with the dispatch of Shafter's army to Cuba in the Spanish War, where confusion and mismanagement ruled from first to last. The British, who have had to face great problems in South Africa and dur-

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ing this war in moving large forces at sea, have given it their unstinted praise.

General Pershing, with his staff, had arrived in France from London on the 13th. He hurried to the dock to greet General Sibert, and with little delay the troops filed off the boats and marched out to their first camp amid cheers and cries of "*Vivent les Etats Unis!*" and "*Nos amis!*" the latter phrase becoming interpreted as "Sammies," a name which has been adopted largely for the American soldiers, without enthusiasm on their part. In two days the entire force and its supplies were landed. The Age of Chivalry is not dead, and no Crusaders marched for a higher purpose than the soldiers of the United States now landing to help free France.

On July 4, the troops paraded through Paris, where they received a tremendous ovation, and again on France's Day (July 14), when a special contingent marched in the annual review with their French comrades. Special departmental forces training in England received their public reception on August 15, when they marched across London, led by the massed bands of the Guards, and were reviewed by Ambassador Page and Admiral Sims at the Embassy, and then by the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace.

From the necessary policy of secrecy for troop movements, England has had few opportunities for showing enthusiasm during the war. Famous bat-

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talions have been moved quietly at night, and public farewells have been prohibited. This undoubtedly led to apathy on the part of the masses in the early stages of the war, and only the Australians and the Republican Guard Band of France had given London a chance to show its fervor until the American troops marched through its historic streets to the strains of "The long, long trail." The reaction of long-suppressed feeling added to the zest of the spontaneous welcome expressed by the countless thousands packed along the route from Waterloo Station.

Every week the arrival of fresh contingents is adding to the army in France, and though the number of men is a secret, it was officially announced in October that the hundred thousand mark had been exceeded without the loss of a single life in crossing. The incomparable marines took up land duty with avidity. The infantry also was soon busy with intensive training for trench warfare under British and French instructors, and the artillery followed under the leadership of Brigadier General Peyton March.

The first work of the engineers was to improve the communications with the various training centers and to take over definite sections of French railroads from the coast bases to the permanent camps.

At this interval, it was interesting to leave the subconscious war depression of Europe and spend

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a few weeks in the United States, to imbibe magnificent optimism and return with a full realization of the gigantic effort that is being made to play a notable part in the conflict. Many persons in Europe expected grave disorder in the raising of a conscript army. The labor unions of Great Britain had long dreaded the word "conscription," and though a magnificent army answered the call, the unfairness and defects of the volunteer system were obvious. Voluntary recruiting in the United States had raised the Regular Army to 300,000 men of the highest grade of physical fitness, and the National Guard to 300,000.

On July 20, 1917, lots were drawn for selective drafts from nearly ten million men who had registered. The Secretary of War opened the drawing with the first number, 258. Many other noted men drew a capsule, and then the work devolved on regular tellers until 10,500 numbers had been listed, checked, recorded, and sent to every state so that the men holding corresponding numbers in each section of the country could hold themselves in readiness for examination, until each state quota was filled to furnish the necessary 687,000 men required for the National Army. Recalling the draft riots in 1863, the contrast in 1917 was remarkable. The system worked perfectly, in the face of the efforts of some pro-Germans and pacifist editors to emphasize the sufferings and dangers of modern warfare.

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While the Boards were selecting the cream of American manhood for service, the cantonments for training the National Guard and the new army were prepared at the following points:

National Guard: Greenville and Spartanburg, South Carolina; Augusta and Macon, Georgia; Montgomery and Anniston, Alabama; Fort Worth, Texas; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; Deming, New Mexico; Waco and Houston, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Alexandria, Louisiana; Linda Vista and Palo Alto, California.

National Army: Ayer, Massachusetts; Yaphank, Long Island; Wrightstown, New Jersey; Annapolis Junction, Maryland; Petersburg, Virginia; Columbia, South Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; Chillicothe, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky; Battle Creek, Michigan; Rockford, Illinois; Little Rock, Arkansas; Des Moines, Iowa; Fort Riley, Kansas; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; American Lake, Washington.

When the National Guard regiments were federalized, they were gradually moved to the cantonments in order to start training without delay. At this time, after receiving a report from General Pershing, the War Department decided to reorganize the units of the army so as to correspond with the standard of the divisions of the Allies. The original infantry division was composed of three brigades of three regiments. The new divisions called for 27,152 men and 416 machine guns, divided into

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two brigades of two regiments each, but with the size of the regiments increased to 103 officers and 3,652 men, in companies of six officers and 250 men.

The platoon is the chief operating unit, 58 men under a lieutenant, and is divided into one section of bombers and rifle grenadiers, two sections of riflemen, and eleven men with automatic rifles.

The division is made up of the following units: division headquarters, 164 men; machine-gun battalions, 768 men; 2 infantry brigades of two regiments, 16,420; brigade division artillery—3 regiments field artillery and 1 trench mortar battery—5,068; field signal Battalion, 262; engineer regiment, 1,666; train and police, 337; ammunition column, 962; supply train, 472; engineer train, 84; sanitary and ambulance department, 949. Total 27,152 men.

Each division has 14 machine-gun companies, and 48 sections automatic rifles. It is interesting to note that when war broke out the United States had only 1,000 machine guns.

To bring the National Guard regiments to war strength rapidly, drastic measures of redistribution had to be taken which caused temporary unhappiness to men who had long served with a particular regiment and were obliged to transfer in order to fill up the ranks of units specially selected to be first for France. It was a hard blow to men devoted to

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famous regiments, and saturated with tradition, to be moved suddenly to another command. But the men accepted the change in a proper spirit, and in a few weeks other regiments were grouped together to form commands of full strength, each receiving its Federal number in a system that is aiming at efficiency and cannot at this crisis take time to cater to tradition.

While preparations were being made for the draft, officers' training camps were establishing at the principal army stations, while college camps and the Plattsburg idea—which had already provided a valuable nucleus of trained officers when war started—were enlarged to carry out this work. Germany has scoffed at this hurried training, overlooking the short but invaluable period when the call for preparedness stirred the colleges and led thousands of business men also to master the rudiments of drill. She has also forgotten the thousands of others in the National Guard who have spent their time training in the armories and on the Texas border. These were the men whom three months of intensive training could make valuable captains for the new National Army, fully fitted to take up the first drilling of recruits while they are also learning the great lesson—the control and understanding of men—and using every spare hour in work to perfect themselves for the test to come. Britain's "contemptible" army has taught the War Lords some lessons, and

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yet the German mind persists in its delusions. It brags in neutral countries that the American effort will not cost them a minute's sleep, basing its contention on arguments so petty that they stir contempt, not anger.

Many who have returned from ravished Europe have felt that Americans were not taking the war seriously. The sudden transition from areas where suffering, bereavement, and destruction are ever present, to the glare of Broadway, to people who can still enjoy music, discuss art values, and sit through plays, is startling. But after the first shock, the great deep purpose that is dominating the country, the determination to see it through, the spirit of the workers, the food conservation and preservation in homes where only the moral need was urging, requires a more powerful pen than mine to praise adequately.

War obsession will come with the casualty lists—it is something to shun like the plague, for it grips the mind too closely. Some writers deplore the “superficial hysteria” of parades and demonstrations which everywhere are stimulating young and old, teaching them that it is their war, their battle for right, not the effort of an official war brain which the people must passively support. And nothing has been more impressive than the enthusiasm of the conscript army, the interest shown in the new camps where men of every grade, from homes of wealth



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and from East Side tenements, unused to discipline, raw to military service, are learning the great lesson of democratic comradeship, together with a subjective idealism that stirs the soul. If one wishes a concrete object lesson of the spirit of the National Army, he should visit some camp where he can see the bitter disappointment of men who have failed to pass the final test. With rigid physical examination at the outset and after preliminary training, with skilled psychiatrists weeding out the mental weaklings and those with unstable nerves, the new army that is gathering for France will be the most perfect that the world has known. When the war broke out, the Allies were forced to throw in every available man to stem the tide. In exposed trenches, without proper artillery, there was often a shocking waste of perfect manhood at points where inferior troops could have done the work and saved the cream for a later era where the highest standard was imperative.

Those days are past. In three years scientific tactics have been evolved, and high qualities of courage and initiative as well as fortitude are required to wrest supremacy from a foe which at the outset enjoyed every advantage and demanded an awful toll of "cannon fodder" until the Allies could catch up and adequately answer the challenge thrown suddenly at an unsuspecting world.

On a broad basis of common experience, each army

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to-day employs its own methods. France, England, and personal experience are all necessary tutors for the new forces which can profit by the bitter lessons which the other troops have learned in blood and trench slime. But the United States Army will fight in its own fashion, utilizing the past experience of others with an untired vision and a strong vitality. Gradually there will come a new evolution of tactics and theory on the American front.

The use of the bayonet suits the dogged determination of the British troops. Their main idea is to close in on the enemy and engage him hand to hand in a struggle where they soon prove that they are the better men. But this frequently leads to heavy losses in an impetuous advance. The French swear more by grenades which can effectively confuse and rout an enemy at a greater distance. Americans are learning the methods of both armies, but their tactics will still retain faith in the rifle. It needs a cool head and steady nerve amid the crash of bursting shells and the hail from machine guns, to pause for effective aim at close range, when it would seem more easy to dash through the agony and get it over. Even in these days of changed German methods, there are many times when the rifle can do the best work.

The motto of all the Allied armies is "Forward!" and only Germany at present has reason to study permanent field works. But American engineers in France are not neglecting defensive studies, to make

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the front secure and save the men in case of attack. At present the United States must depend upon France for guns. The artillery is being trained on magnificent proving grounds with French guns and howitzers. Artillery is playing the major part in this fighting, and no arm of the service is so difficult to create after the outbreak of hostilities. At the outset, France's field guns proved their superiority in many ways; but in every movement the early successes of the Allies were checked when the Germans could bring heavy guns into action. The French 155 mm. gun is very effective; it has caterpillar wheels and can be both moved and operated rapidly. British batteries are now the most powerful that the world has known. But at first the Allies had no adequate heavy artillery.

The French field gunners specialize in indirect fire, and their "75's" are the best field batteries in the world. The German in attack in open battle at first massed their batteries and flung them forward, protecting the guns by machine-gun detachments. With huge reserves of trained gunners to draw upon, they could face the loss of men entailed. With the morale shaken by the roar of guns at close range, the first lines were at a disadvantage when masses of German infantry were brought up and launched at some vulnerable point in the shell-torn front of hastily constructed trenches. But not one assault

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in a hundred gained success commensurate with the loss of men sustained.

The efficiency of Krupp was ably seconded by the Skoda works of Austria. Any one who knows these works realizes that the Teutonic Allies entered the war with a perfect artillery equipment. But as the months of slaughter dragged on, the French and British slowly overcame their costly and surprising deficiencies.

In the early mobilization, skilled French workers were swept to the front and killed before the country could recover its poise. In Pas de Calais, engineering works, imperative for scores of military necessities, had been closed through lack of labor, and valuable property was scrapped because simple repairs could not be made. The British enlisted and lost thousands of skilled men soon wanted to make guns and shells. A selective draft obviates these errors.

Second only to Krupps are the French ordnance works at Le Creusot. From these famous factories which have given France her world-famed "75" guns, howitzers and mortars are now being turned out in quantity and quality which have rearranged the average. While the Germans were blaming the United States for making ammunition for France, the Schneider Company, coöperating with the Government, was turning out at Bourges and other works all the shells necessary for the French Army.

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Germany alone seemed to appreciate at first the expenditure of ammunition necessary to maintain an average battle. While the British were still using shrapnel, much of Germany's first success came from her high explosive shells which tore away all obstructions and killed by concussion. The secret of the penetration of their great shells against forts was the soft nose or cap which spread on impact and tore through the hardest steel. The sixteen-inch defense gun of the United States is in all points superior to the German or Austrian siege guns, except for the mounting for mobile field work. Its range is 18,580 yards, and muzzle velocity 2,250 feet per second. The projectile weighs 2,400 pounds. Yet the Krupp howitzers were called a surprise to the world.

Trinitrotoluol, or T. N. T., now in general use, is a powerful and safe explosive, derived from a coal-tar product and more easily handled than Melinite or Lyddite, with their dangerous base of picric acid. T. N. T. can easily be prepared from coal, and the seizure of the main coal and iron fields of France and Belgium has greatly solved the question of German ammunition. Ammonal, used in the Austrian shells, deteriorates easily, and in Belgium and at Maubeuge many of these shells failed to explode.

In machine guns, the Vickers-Maxim of the latest model, which was severely tested and approved by the Sixth Cavalry in Texas, has received high praise

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from the British for its simplicity and durability. The Benét-Mercier (also used in the United States Army) is lighter, is air-cooled, and can be fired without a tripod, but certain disadvantages are ascribed in France to the lighter weapons, which outweigh their greater rapidity of fire. All authorities seem to favor a tripod to insure accuracy, although the Germans frequently steady their weapon with chains from the belt—padlocked so that the gunners have no chance to escape and so work their weapons until the last.

From guns let us turn to casualties. France owes a great debt to the American Ambulance men who have worked so tirelessly among her wounded. The United State Hospitals at Etaples have also done magnificent work for the British troops, maintaining a large and efficient staff under Major Collins, U. S. A., and Dr. Cushing of Harvard. American wounded will now reap the full benefit of earlier research and will escape many of the perils that have so greatly added to the death toll in France.

Nothing is more bewildering than the stream of wounded which pours down the lines of communications after a battle. Splendid hospital trains, adjacent ports and ships to take the wounded home, have mitigated the sufferings of the British troops. With the enemy holding a vast area and contingent railroads, the French have faced greater difficulties. Enough hospital trains cannot always be run on

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congested railroads, and after engagements the ordinary trains have to be utilized, where the springless box cars with the familiar "*Hommes 32-40 Chevaux (En Long) 8*," become messengers of horror to the shattered bodies which must be conveyed beyond the war zone. But the agony of smashed bones and torn flesh is soon allayed by the splendid efficiency of the hospitals of the *Croix Rouge Française* under the joint management of the societies of the *Secours aux Blessés*, *Femmes de France*, and *Les Dames Française*. During the first weeks of war, the appalling records of French wounded could not be compiled. During the six weeks following the Marne victory—September 15 to November 30—there were 489,333, practically half a million French wounded; and the Army and the French Red Cross together had organized and equipped 3,968 hospitals and had set up 400,000 permanent beds. These figures will help one to realize the sufferings of French democracy.

Surgery and science have made vast strides during the war, where desperate cases in thousands have justified the most drastic and heroic experiments, from which accepted theories have become negatived and new facts have been successfully demonstrated, with marvelous results. The fertilized soil of the war zone abounds in deadly bacilli. At first, gangrene, tetanus, and kindred complications supervened with appalling frequency. The foremost sur-

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geons of France, Great Britain, and the United States have devoted their time and skill to the subject, with extraordinary success. An anti-tetanus serum was soon prepared, and owing to the rapid action of the bacilli measures were instituted to inoculate the wounded on the field. The first work of the Army Medical Corps is to apply a field dressing and inject the serum.

The continued fury of modern battle and the delay in removing the wounded on crowded lines of communications made common gangrene very frequent in the French Army. But it was soon obvious that the disease which supervenes from delay in dressing a wound also rose from direct infection by a deadly germ that long defied detection and terminated in amputation or fatality. The antidote has now been discovered.

Clean wounds are rare among men exposed for weeks in muddy trenches. The rigors of the campaign often weaken the powers of resistance to infection. Experiments are, however, evolving a universal serum which contains the elements of the most common and deadly bacilli of the battle field. Prompt injection after a wound enables the blood to resist the progress of the most dangerous invaders, and a second injection will so stimulate the reaction that, when the infection of the wound commences, the blood of the patient is ready to neutralize the enemy. As the science is developed it may



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become customary in the near future to inoculate all the soldiers going to the front with a serum which will render them immune to the most horrible penalties of war, though at present cultures on an enormous scale can barely sustain the supply necessary to treat the wounded. Dothienteric fever and exanthematic typhus are no longer dreaded, but there are still forms of gas gangrene which defy treatment.

General experience in the war is proving the theory that resistance to infection should come from within rather than from without. Powerful disinfectants dry the healing lymph which nature throws out to kill bacteria, and destroy tissue, in which new germs can quickly find a home. New discoveries enable the germs to be attacked safely from without and within, and thus the dangers are minimized.

Hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved by antityphoid inoculation. The valuable experience of the United States troops roused both the French and British authorities to the importance of the treatment. With thousands of decomposing bodies and the conditions which must arise from millions of men living in earthworks, their armies have enjoyed comparative immunity. Dysentery, cholera, enteric, and many other evils have raised their heads, but all have been successfully combated. Even cerebrospinal meningitis has been checked, the fatal microbe being boldly extracted in sufficient

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quantity to give ample supply for its study and combat. Thus from War, the grim destroyer, there has sprung scientific knowledge which must prove of enormous value to humanity.

After first aid has been applied on the field, the casualties are carried to the ambulance stations where some attention can be given—the British generally including an intravenous saline infusion; they are then sent to a regular dressing station on the edge of the danger zone, and thence to the nearest casualty clearing station, where the patients pass under the eye of skilled surgeons who operate when necessary, and the men are there prepared for the final ordeal of transfer to the base hospitals.

The French *Premières Postes de Secour* are usually bomb-proof excavations in the actual trenches. Light cars have now been installed—“*voitures de garde*”—which carry two stretchers and can ply from close to the firing line to the ambulance trains which run to the evacuation hospitals. The casualty clearing stations are set up in houses safely available near the fighting. The building is scoured, drenched with carbolic, and whitewashed. Army cots—stretchers on trestles—are set up, bed ticks are filled with straw, and a room is fitted up for operations. Portable sterilizers, Arnold kettles for dressings, and operating tables are placed, and in a few hours an efficient hospital is improvised. Directly a convoy arrives, each patient is examined

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by the officer of the day, tagged, and sorted in wards. The "cases" are washed, dressed, and, unless urgent, are given a cigarette—the soldier's analgesic. Then, after a bowl of soup, the patient is induced to sleep until the surgeon is ready. It is comforting to know that the percentage of casualties is now much lighter than in the earlier battles, and the ratio of death from wounds is greatly reduced. The shambles of the earlier periods are past history.

Special schools for the training of officers in infantry tactics have been organized in France by General Bullard, and every lesson is being thoroughly learned by eager students who will impart the knowledge to the new regiments, so that every unit will take its place at the front trained in the art of modern war. And that means conservation of life.

When in the United States recently, I was surprised to hear contempt expressed for men who had joined ambulance companies. Those who know the danger of collecting wounded under fire, the difficulty of carrying stretchers across shell-swept, muddy ground, realize that nerve and endurance of high quality are required. France at first had to rely on ambulance men unfit for army service. They worked heroically, but they had not the stamina for the task, and suffering and death resulted. As I recently watched American stretcher bearers under training, my mind reverted to the horror of the early

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days of the war, from which the troops of the United States will largely be spared.

In feeding and equipment of the American forces, efficiency and forethought are evident on every side. Most of the grave disasters that threatened the army in Cuba arose from imperfect commissary. Coffee was shipped unroasted and unground. The canned beef was offal. Crackers were sent in unlined boxes and arrived in a moldy pulp, and there were no anti-scorbutic rations. To-day the supply organization is reaching for perfection. Trained cooks, field-kitchens, a varied diet, and a rigid system of inspection which secures only the best for the army will prevent the development of those weak points which often have serious consequences in the field.

Each war winter in Europe has been more severe than its predecessor. The human cataclysm seems to have affected the elements, and for three years the secure defensive of the enemy made the weather his greatest ally. The fourth winter started early, but on great stretches of the front the warm German dugouts have gone and in the new system of defenses mud, rain, and cold are telling heavily. But the general health of the American troops remains good, and thanks to the busy fingers of devoted women large supplies of knitted garments are enabling the men to face the rawness of France with equanimity. Crush those pro-German stories that say that this work is wasted. The need for voluntary effort is

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great—your socks and sweater may save a life—and though in the first enthusiasm some regiments enjoyed a surfeit and others went short, a perfect organization is growing, and nothing sent through the proper channels is wasted. With suitable clothing and food, open-air life acts as a tonic, and the first weeks of exposure to a war winter have left the American troops with a percentage of sickness one-half that of the normal figures of an army post.

The canvas legging is the only article of equipment criticized, and it will be replaced by the puttee. The British steel helmet, which is by far the most effective yet made, has been issued to the army.

With the countryside long stripped of active men, the barns and wagon sheds in which thousands of troops are billeted needed more than ordinary policing. The story of Santiago was repeated. Every district was rapidly cleaned out. Surface drains were dug, cesspools removed, water supply installed, and with a generous scouring and whitewashing of interiors the ancient villages have been made over. Every law of sanitation is now enforced.

Think what this vigor means to those war-tired French women and old men who have been carrying their lonely burdens with dull resignation. To-day they face the future with a strengthened faith. Of course, the cheery optimism of American soldiers sometimes wounds the susceptibilities of those who

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have borne the awful weight from the outset. The confident way that the men speak of smashing the stubborn line, of "sweeping to the Rhine," the spirit that believes there will not be much more to do than cheer when the new army strikes in force, sometimes grates on the ears of Allies who have had to do so much with edge-worn tools, and who feel that their sacrifices have broken the back of the enemy's first power of resistance. Yet what an asset is this unshaken confidence! In itself it creates the winning spirit, and by no means should it be discouraged. Americans who appreciate the conditions faced by the Allies and who feel that these are early days for boasting, will have an easier task in explaining this spirit to those who will reap much from its virtues, than in trying to curb youthful tongues which sometimes seem tactless.

I have seen four major air raids where Americans stood the test: two in France, where college ambulances dashed through the area when bombs and shrapnel were falling; two in England, where army nurses raced as volunteers with fearless British ambulance women, and American soldiers joined British Tommies in dragging victims from burning débris when the air was full of bursting shells. Such incidents strike a note of harmony that has the deepest import.

The French and British officers expected self-reliance, courage, and initiative in the American Army.

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But they doubted its discipline. This is a quality which they no longer question.

Here is one keynote of the system from United States Army regulations:

“When issuing orders, a commander should indicate clearly what should be done by each subordinate, but not how it is to be done. A subordinate who is reasonably sure that his intended action would be ordered by the commander were he present, has encouragement to go ahead confidently. When circumstances render it impracticable to consult the authority issuing an order, officers should not hesitate to vary it when it is clearly based on an incorrect view of the situation, or has been rendered impracticable on account of changes since its promulgation. Superiors should be careful not to censure an apparent disobedience when the act was done in a proper spirit and to advance a general plan.”

I could give a hundred instances of German failure from lack of subordinate initiative. At times when a specified target has been designated, the artillery has lost vital opportunities while they waited for orders to change it. Troops sent to capture a certain section have frequently failed to go on when the chance was theirs. After the first gas attack at Ypres, a wide gap was filled up and a new front built under the eyes of masses that had halted, unopposed, for supports, and came on again too late.

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Impetuosity must be restrained, but initiative must never be lost.

During the last week of October, 1917, a shot was heard which echoed around the world. American troops had moved up the night before to share the first-line trenches with the French. It was wet and cold, but officers had to order their men to stop singing as they marched through the blackness which develops a sixth sense. When they moved cheerily to the first line, every soldier received a warm greeting from the poilus, and then settled himself in the mud for a tiresome vigil, with sentries peering for the first time across the desolation of "No Man's Land" to the enemy's position.

The men had previously been trained on an area dugout in a replica of the section which they were to occupy. For days they had repeated every item of duty. Their final dress rehearsal took place under Joffre's eye, and then the men started on the first real step of the Great Adventure. Every unit took its place without a sound reaching the watchful enemy, and at 6 A. M. American gunners, sandwiched with the French *artiflots* on the front artillery position, fired their first shot. The shell case was given to General Sibert to be forwarded to President Wilson.

An artillery duel was soon raging, the American gunners working the famous French "75's."



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Though Sergeant Calderwood and Private Brannigan of the railroad troops, struck by shell splinters, were the first American soldiers to be wounded in France, the honor of the first wound under combat conditions goes to Lieutenant Harden of the Signal Corps, who was injured by a shell splinter.

On the night of October 27, an American patrol beyond the French wire met their first Germans, who were taking a short cut between the trenches. Bolting when challenged, one was mortally wounded, and then carried back for the most considerate treatment possible until the end. A week later, a superior German force, under a heavy barrage, raided a minor salient on this front, killing three Americans and capturing twelve. The names of Enright, Gresham and Hay appear first on the army's roll of honored dead.

After a few days' experience, German sniping died down. American sharpshooters had an unpleasant knack of locating their shots and replying accurately. Week by week battalions are relieving each other on the first lines, intelligently carrying out the generally monotonous duties of trench warfare. As the training grew more complete, the French troops were permanently relieved. The final test for which all are waiting will come with the order "Over the top and the best of luck!"

There is little pessimism among any troops at the front. The British army is at the zenith of its

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power and asks only for fine weather. Their guns of enormous range are giving the Germans no winter respite. The French army, with 3,000,000 seasoned fighting men, is more resigned, but never despondent. The American Army is eagerly waiting the word to attack, straining at the leash.

In early December Italy prayed for snow to cover passes usually blocked in October. For the first time the British army on the Western front was holding heights where comparative winter comfort was assured while the enemy, ousted from warm dugouts and forced to a more open defence system on low ground, was greatly exposed.

The weakening of Russian resistance at a time when the army was never more adequately supplied with guns and ammunition, robbed both the British and French armies of the full fruits of a year of continual successes—its collapse has enabled Germany to greatly increase her power in men and material on the Western front with the fullest intention of utilizing her resources to the full before the forces of the United States are ready. Four mild weeks helped the transfer.

With blatant German boast to hearten at home and shake the determination of the Allies at this trying period, 1918 dawns with renewed threats of the mailed fist and rattling of the Potsdam sabre. The result has been electrical. With unshaken Faith

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and grim resolve, Great Britain and France are standing shoulder to shoulder to meet the menace. The spirit which won on the Marne, and held the line against great odds in Picardy, Artois, Flanders and Verdun, the armies which have fought many successful battles since, are neither likely to flinch now nor to relax one iota of their effort when the full power of the United States is developed.

Granting his augmented strength, at no vital point is the enemy in as advantageous a position as he was a year ago. His loudest boasts are based on recent tactical successes before Cambrai, which must be weighed carefully. At the close of General Byng's spectacular sweep across the centre of the Siegfried section of the final Hindenburg line, the most definite breach of the defences formed an irregular salient with its apex pointing toward Cambrai and its strategic railroads. The Germans have always been able to detrain reserves rapidly on this front. For eight days they made no vigorous reply to the threat to their main communications but they gathered 25 divisions in the Cambrai area while the British faced huge difficulties in consolidating a front suddenly advanced across a wide battle torn district entailing big problems of transport and reorganization, especially for artillery.

At dawn on Nov. 30, without preliminary bombardment a sudden onslaught was made by Von Marwitz and the augmented 2nd Army. Dense

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masses of men were flung suddenly on the sectors north and south of the salient in a desperate effort to cut it off at the base and isolate the troops maintaining the wedge. On the upper sections successive attempts were repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy. On the south the defenders were overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers on a narrow front, storm troops poured in the gap and rolled up a section of the line, capturing men and guns.

La Vacquirie was recaptured by the enemy, Gonnellieu enveloped while forces poured westward and surprised Gouzeancourt, which was full of wounded and refugees released by the British in their victory the week before. The promise of a sweeping German success was soon ended. Gunners fired heavy howitzers at close range, removed the breach-blocks and joined mixed detachments rallied from departmental units by staff officers surprised at breakfast. American railroad troops who had brought up supplies, left their trains and with a strange assortment of weapons helped to head off the first parties of the eager enemy. Some of these parties fought to the last gasp, holding out until the British Guards came up and cleared the place in their stride, recapturing many guns, as they went forward and rebuilt the line on an amended front.

Heavy fighting soon raged on every sector and the battle developed to the fury of the Verdun offensive. Regardless of losses, masses of men were

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flung against the salient. At the apex which was blunted, and at other exposed points, the British front was drawn back to more advantageous ground. The woods west of Cambrai, flooded by the most virulent gas from two sides, were finally evacuated in perfect order. After many days of storming, at heavy cost, the Germans had failed in their effort to restore their original front and had succeeded only in hammering the British lines back to a solid defence from the irregular high tide mark achieved in their rapid surge across a massively fortified position. Before Christmas heavy snows blanketed the front and concealed the heaps of enemy dead sacrificed in fighting reminiscent of the early Ypres battles and marked by exhaustion and disintegration of famous divisions, without decisive result. The year has closed with another futile drive which leaves the Allied armies sternly confident—notably those forces of the United States that have full knowledge of the War's realities.

No one who has seen the horrors of this or any war can write a pæan to glorify it. Neither can they minimize its great spiritual values. No man can face death or see his comrades go to the Great Unknown, and remain unchanged. Splendid lessons of self-sacrifice are learned daily. Everything material in life has an altered value, and new spiritual influences create an idealism over the stern veneer

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that hardship and lack of comfort create. Acheron has to be crossed, but in the passing there is the call of something higher than self, and a reward that cannot be judged by material standards.













